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New York

President: Mr. Ping ..... (Gabon)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Address by Mr. Ion Iliescu, President of Romania

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of Romania.

Mr. Ion Iliescu, President of Romania, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Ion Iliescu, President of Romania, and to invite him to address the General Assembly.

President Iliescu (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset to join others who have warmly congratulated you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at this session. I wish you every success in your important undertaking, which will enjoy the full support of the Romanian delegation.

For some years now, this great worldwide gathering has opened in the wake of deadly terrorist attacks that require us to respond as one to voice strong condemnation of all terrorist acts and a commitment to contributing ever more energetically to the affirmation of effective multilateralism that will make global action increasingly effectual.

In that context, I cannot fail briefly to address the issue of the struggle against terrorism, which is more urgent today than ever before. Since September 2001, the level of violence of acts of terrorism — perpetrated in the name of ideological, territorial, religious or ethnic differences and incompatibilities — has risen dramatically.

At the same time, the very nature of terrorist acts has changed. The complexity and scale of such barbarism, claiming the lives of hundreds or even thousands of innocent victims — often children, as in the recent incident in Beslan — are indescribably grim and represent immense challenges. Yet another factor is at play in all this: the increase in the number of terrorist acts. In such conditions, the struggle against that scourge — whose implications are not only immediate, but also complex and global in nature — is an urgent and ongoing obligation for all States.

Romania promptly and meaningfully joined the anti-terrorism campaign and has demonstrated its resolve to contribute to eradicating it. We believe, however, that the struggle to end terrorism must also address its underlying causes, including poverty, and must not be used as a pretext for flouting or violating human rights. If that were to occur, we would be playing into the hands of the perpetrators of terrorist acts, who not only seek loss of life and devastation, but strive above all to destroy symbols and values. On the other hand, promoting respect for human rights and democratic values is the only way to eliminate such manifestations of hatred and violence.

The nature and, above all, the inherent dangers of the current international context make the development of cooperation among all kinds of international actors,

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State and non-State alike, increasingly urgent. As an Organization that is universal by vocation and in legitimacy, the United Nations must fully assume its role as the driving force behind efforts to adapt to changes in the international environment. In an interdependent world, no single State is safe from such dangers or from threats to international peace and security, including terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the increasing number of States affected by instability, the growth of global disparities, humanitarian crises, ethnic wars and intra-State wars.

Managing such risks requires a comprehensive and coherent approach on the part of the United Nations, including through the promotion of preventive political and diplomatic measures, such as the strengthening of international treaties and conventions on combating terrorism and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; efforts to make international export control regimes and specialized international structures more effective; and, in extreme cases, recourse to coercive measures, in accordance with the United Nations Charter.

Our Organization has one strong and complex tool at its disposal in meeting such challenges. I refer to the Security Council, in which Romania is striving to make a real contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security and the establishment of a world climate of stability, with particular emphasis on fighting terrorism, preventing conflicts and humanitarian crisis situations, maintaining the unity of Council members and supporting consensus solutions, and encouraging cooperation on stabilization between the United Nations and regional organizations. With respect to that last issue, I would note that Romania has been and continues to be interested in cooperation between the global Organization and the regional and subregional pillars. Given the current international context, that is of major importance.

(*spoke in English*)

The need to speed up the reform of the United Nations is more urgent than ever. The series of challenges, more or less new, that the Organization has to face in the twenty-first century make its reform a priority if its structures and working methods are to adapt to the present realities. The terms of reference continue to be efficiency, adaptability and progress. Romania looks forward to the recommendations of the Secretary-General on the report of the eminent persons so that we may embrace, together with other States, a collective effort that cannot afford delay.

We hope that the sixtieth anniversary of the Organization's establishment will mark significant progress in the process of adapting the United Nations to the new challenges, and especially the Security Council, the essential body in the management of world peace and stability. Our relation to that organ, as a non-permanent member, increases our conviction that a new configuration, closely reflecting current realities by increasing the number of permanent and non-permanent seats, will consolidate the representative profile of the Security Council and thus its authority and efficiency.

I cannot ignore another aspect of our contemporary world. Both a source of challenges and a most generous framework for opportunities, the phenomenon of globalization is unavoidable and affects us all. Given its nature, the United Nations is ideally placed to manage the phenomenon, particularly by correcting its consequences.

In that context, Romania fully embraces the Global Compact Initiative of our Secretary-General, which needs support and strengthening. All Member States must promote regional and transcontinental integration as vehicles and instruments of a harnessed globalization. In this case, the European Union stands as a success story, since it acts as a vector not only of economic integration, but also of democratic values and human rights. The United Nations has to try to find ways to adjust the rules of the world market in order to diminish, in the medium and long terms, the big gaps that exist between the rich countries and the poor.

Another priority in our efforts to harness globalization is the need to enhance coordination among the specialized agencies and institutions of the United Nations system in their work to ensure the diffusion of information technology at a lower cost. We need to show more determination in our attempts to decrease the gaps in this field, and to guarantee the evolution of less developed countries from a state of marginalization to one catalysed by knowledge-based development.

Allow me to turn now to another essential factor for a better future, one that Secretary-General Kofi Annan also underlined in his introductory speech — the rule of law. The validity of the principles of the

Charter of the United Nations have not only withstood the test of time, but they have also been reaffirmed by a whole new network of international agreements, mandatory standards and norms of action to which States have voluntarily acceded, mechanisms for the peaceful settlement of disputes and monitoring commitments.

As a proof of our faith in the international law system, Romania appealed this year for the first time to the International Court of Justice — the main judicial body of the United Nations — to resolve a question of maritime delimitation. Romania also appealed to an international investigation commission to solve the case of an infrastructure works project with cross-border impact on the Bistroe Channel in the Danube Delta. Our appeal concerns the need for close collaboration in order to protect a unique and fragile place, a UNESCO world heritage site.

Our efforts towards an effective multilateralism also involve us in other major issues on the United Nations agenda. Romania has promptly joined, and substantially contributed to, international efforts for the stabilization and reconstruction of Afghanistan and Iraq, in keeping with its long history of participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations and the provision of assistance in post-conflict phases.

The global vocation and aspirations of my country are closely related to its European destiny. The focus of Romanian diplomacy is therefore oriented towards the democratic stabilization of our neighbouring region and its effective connection to a united Europe. For too long that region has been affected by wars and all kinds of tensions, often acute ones. Under such circumstances, Romania can only support, alongside all of Europe, a boost to democracy, economic development and a long-lasting stabilization of the countries in the region.

At the same time, Romania is ready to contribute to the stability and development of all countries in the Black Sea region. We hope to turn this strategic area — with its close connections to other regions of immense potential, including the Mediterranean Basin, the Caucasus, Central Asia and the Middle East — into a cooperation and security zone.

I cannot conclude without making a brief reference to another theme to which Romania attaches particular importance. My country strongly supports concerted action to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. In an international context that is often volatile and defined by a growing complexity and increased interdependence, we cannot ignore the necessity for immediate action, using the means offered by our global Organization, in particular the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004).

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Romania for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Ion Iliescu, President of Romania, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Enrique Bolaños Geyer, President of the Republic of Nicaragua

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Nicaragua.

Mr. Enrique Bolaños Geyer, President of the Republic of Nicaragua, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Enrique Bolaños Geyer, President of the Republic of Nicaragua, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Bolaños Geyer (*spoke in Spanish*): In the middle of the nineteenth century railroads were built all over the world. Steel at that time was not of such good quality and for that reason wheels sometimes broke, causing accidents and derailments. To avoid those accidents, at every station stop there was a brakeman who walked the length of the tracks, hammer in hand, hammering on the wheels so that any of the wheels that sounded broken could be changed. Years passed and the quality of steel improved, but the brakemen kept hammering on the wheels, heedless of the fact that it was no longer necessary.

The world changes, and that means that we, too, need to change in order to adapt to new circumstances. Something similar is happening in the United Nations. The Security Council, designed after the Second World War to maintain peace in the post-war world, is not the Security Council that the new century of information technology and globalization needs. We must reinvent the United Nations.

Let us begin by making the reform of the United Nations, on which we have already agreed, effective. We have to broaden participation in the Security Council to include other countries, both as permanent members — which at the very least should include Germany and Japan — and as non-permanent members, in order to allow for more equitable and democratic representation.

Our Organization needs to adapt to the new challenges and realities of the present. Development, for example, needs a new approach. What concerns us most is to ensure that populations and individuals participate more actively in the decisions shaping their own future. As I said three days ago, in the "Action Against Hunger and Poverty" meeting of world leaders, development is a responsibility of States, but it is also the primary responsibility of the individual.

I find the words of Nobel Laureate José Saramago are appropriate here when he writes:

> "As vehemently as we claim our rights, let us also lay claim to responsibility for our duties. Perhaps then the world will become a bit better."

So it was a wise thing that our American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man, signed in Bogotá in 1948, established that equal to, and as a counterpart to rights, there are also individual responsibilities.

That includes instilling in the conscience of citizens a culture of responsibility. Next to the right to receive a State-sponsored education stands the civil responsibility to make the most effective use of that education and to obtain at least a primary education. Next to the right of children to have a father and a mother stands the duty of parents to care for, help, feed, educate and shelter their young children. Children, for their part, have the responsibility always to honour their parents, help them, feed them and give them shelter when they are in need. Next to the right to employment stands the duty to provide efficient service. Everyone has the responsibility to work, each according to his ability and possibilities, in order to obtain the resources for survival, thus achieving personal progress and social development.

Along with the right to health goes the responsibility to contribute to a healthy and clean environment. With the right to enjoy the benefits of progress goes the responsibility to contribute to development. With the right to the freedom of expression goes the responsibility of tolerating differing opinions. In short, every right has a corresponding duty or responsibility.

With the fall of the Berlin wall, the age in which the State was expected to be responsible for everything came to a close. Today, we must all participate together in the search for new paths for our individual development and for that of our countries and of all humanity.

The passing of time motivates us to renew our basic principles. I therefore propose that we once again adopt an ethic of development based principally on individual responsibility as well as on the responsibility of nations.

The well-being and the development of nations are the result of individual well-being and the development of the people that make up that society. Social well-being should not be measured by how many people are assisted by social programmes financed from national budgets but by how many people leave those programmes because they have become able to manage on their own.

In his book, *Underdevelopment is a State of Mind,* Lawrence Harrison defines a negative attitude as a barrier to development and a positive attitude — based on the belief in one's own ability to improve oneself through individual effort — as a driving force of development.

In order to bolster all the elements I have cited, it is essential that the right to accede to public office should be accompanied by the responsibility to carry out one's duties honestly. At the current session of the General Assembly, several heads of State have emphasized the need to fight corruption. It is a responsibility that has rightly been gaining ground.

In Nicaragua, we have undertaken the arduous fight against corruption. First, corrupt bureaucrats have been brought to trial and sentenced, just as is happening in other Latin American countries. Secondly, we have brought before the National Assembly a body of legislation to strengthen our fight against corruption.

Thirdly, we have established a programme for integrity and transparency that prevents corrupt practices in the executive branch and which provides a model for the other branches of Government in

undertaking reform and increasing transparency. For example, we have published on the Internet, for everyone to see — for the countries extending assistance, international organizations and the media — both the Republic's national budget and the details of external assistance.

Fourthly, we have undertaken to fight the culture of corruption, including by teaching values and promoting the idea of the individual as the maker of his or her own destiny.

We must work for a United Nations that reaffirms its credibility and authority by taking the appropriate effective collective action. Nicaragua recognizes the importance of the proposals various countries have submitted to this forum, in particular Spain's proposal to reduce external debt in exchange for initiatives for social development, particularly in the area of primary education, and the United States proposal to create a fund for democracy. Nicaragua views with approval that such a democracy fund would be partially allocated to training and support for auditing and judicial entities, given that corruption is the greatest foe of democracy. As Secretary-General Kofi Annan said yesterday, "They notice when we use words to mask inaction". Nicaragua's energy and determination are devoted to those efforts.

Recent world events have demonstrated once again the evil nature of terrorism and how it breaks down the values of humanity and civilization. I reiterate my most sincere condolences to all those countries and individuals around the world that have suffered the effects of terrorism.

I underline that we deplore, to cite only the most recent acts, those who caused the loss of the precious lives of innocent children in the Russian Federation. We also repudiate the attack against the Australian Embassy in Jakarta.

The best way to defeat terrorism is to remain faithful to our values of freedom, dignity and justice. Terrorism rejects those values.

Nicaragua aspires to be elected as a non-permanent member of the Security Council for 2006 and 2007. Nicaragua, a founding country of the Organization, has known and suffered the horrors of war and has undertaken the democratization of our nation. It is by virtue of the valuable school of our recent history that we can participate in the Security Council. As I stated in this forum last year, whoever knows the horrors of war can contribute more effectively to preventing it.

I cannot fail to refer to the question of Taiwan's representation in the United Nations. That country, with 23 million inhabitants, has a democratic Government and maintains diplomatic, trade and cooperative relations with many Member States of the Organization. However, paradoxically, it lacks membership. That exclusion is inexcusable.

At the beginning of this session, we heard the sad messages from Haiti and the Dominican Republic, which have suffered the devastating effects of nature. I convey our solidarity, encouragement and hope to those countries and to the victims of natural disasters in the United States, Grenada, Jamaica, Panama, the Bahamas, Cuba, Grand Cayman and other islands of the Caribbean.

This afternoon, I began my address by speaking of the responsibilities of citizens. That is the way for our peoples to attain their hopes, expectations and dreams.

May God bless the United Nations and may God always bless Nicaragua.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Nicaragua for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Enrique Bolaños Geyer, President of the Republic of Nicaragua, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Domitien Ndayizeye, President of the Republic of Burundi

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Burundi.

Mr. Domitien Ndayizeye, President of the Republic of Burundi, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Domitien Ndayizeye, President of the Republic of Burundi, and to invite him to address the General Assembly.

President Ndayizeye (*spoke in French*): On behalf of my delegation and on my own behalf, I extend my sincere congratulations to you, Sir, on your well-deserved election to the prestigious presidency of the General Assembly at this session. I assure you of my entire delegation's unwavering support for you in your noble work.

I also pay tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Julian Robert Hunte, for his excellent guidance of the work of the Assembly at the fifty-eighth session.

I also take this opportunity once again to congratulate Secretary-General Kofi Annan on his ongoing dedication and courage in discharging his responsibilities. I thank him for his ever-growing and resolute support for the cause of peace and security throughout the world and in my country, Burundi, in particular.

When the Security Council adopted resolution 1545 (2004) authorizing the deployment of the United Nations Operation in Burundi, the United Nations made a real contribution to the peace process in my country, which two months later is now drawing towards the final phase of that process.

The signing of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi on 28 August 2000 was a decisive step forward in the peace process in my country, which since 1993 had been devastated by the longest crisis in its history, even jeopardizing the very existence of the nation. The Agreement ushered in a new era of calm and a gradual return to peace with the conclusion of ceasefire agreements with the armed political movements, especially since the signing on 16 November 2003 of a comprehensive ceasefire agreement with the main rebel movement Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie-Forces nationales pour la défense de la démocratie.

Today, calm has descended throughout almost all our national territory because we have acted on our firm commitment to implement the agreements. Fully inclusive institutions have gradually been established and we are now preparing to enter the post-transition era with elected institutions, to the satisfaction of our people and that of the international community.

We wish to send the strong message that we are resolved to break the logic of violence and to support the restoration of peace, reconciliation, democracy and development in our country. We also protect and strengthen peace and security by integrating the fighters from the armed movements into the security and defence forces that we will need to establish our national army and police force, to the comfort of all. The process will be complemented by the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants and troops not included in the integration process.

The disarmament, demobilization and professional or social reintegration programme is coordinated at the uppermost level by the highest authorities of our country, including the ministries concerned and representatives of the World Bank, the army and the armed movements. The programme is currently in its first phase, bringing the combatants together into agreed zones. Those combatants will very shortly be transferred to the sites identified for their cantonment, while the Government troops will remain in their barracks. We already have in place a precedent for the integration of the forces, having created a special institutional protection brigade on 1 July. Moreover, mixed military units have begun training in a pilot centre with a view to establishing the national defence force. This approach is intended to correct the ethnic and regional imbalances that have often been observed in our country and that have constituted the source of the social and political conflict that has brought us so much suffering.

The demobilization sites are ready, but we face a terrible shortage of material and financial resources to pay for the increase in the numbers of people we will have to handle in the first few years before progressive demobilization ends. We must recall that demobilization and disarmament will make a real contribution to creating a security environment conducive to the organization of free, democratic, transparent and honest elections.

The draft post-transition constitution, which will serve as the basis for organizing the elections, and other legal and administrative texts were discussed at great length among the politicians in the President's circle and at the levels of mediation and heads of State of the subregion. Some provisions on power-sharing that did not enjoy unanimous support were upheld by 20 of 30 political parties and endorsed by the twenty-second summit of heads of State of the subregion. They were then included in the draft constitution, which was adopted unanimously by our Parliament, with a 70-per cent attendance rate, on 17 September. We have

scheduled a referendum on the draft constitution for 20 October.

Thus, despite the opposition of some political parties, we believe that Burundi will soon have a post-transition constitution and other legal texts that are customary in democratic countries. We are placing our faith in the Independent National Electoral Commission established to organize the technical aspects of the elections. We would stress that the Commission will succeed only if we obtain the support of our external bilateral and multilateral partners. We sincerely thank those who have already pledged their assistance, and we would urge others to follow suit.

The efforts to maintain peace are still being resisted by the Palipehutu-Forces nationales de liberation movement, which still refuses to come to the negotiating table. Following the movement's involvement in the assassination of Papal Nuncio Monsignor Courtney and in the massacre of Congolese refugees in Gatumba and elsewhere, the summit of heads of State of the regional initiative on Burundi, meeting in Dar-es-Salaam, classified it as a terrorist organization and recommended that the United Nations and the African Union take the appropriate restrictive measures. Here, I would like to urge the United Nations to support the decisions taken at that regional summit and thus to follow the lead of the African Union, which has already responded favourably to that appeal. I also take this opportunity to thank the heads of State of the subregion and the mediators for the support that they have constantly provided to the Burundian peace process.

As everyone knows, security concerns are unfortunately not limited to within my country's borders. The security of Burundi affects that of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Tanzania. In the light of that interdependence, an international conference on peace, security, democracy, economic development and regional integration in the Great Lakes region is scheduled for November in Dar es Salaam. That conference will undoubtedly have a positive effect on the countries concerned. I have the firm conviction that it will promote a new dynamic of peace in the entire subregion so that we can bury the hatchet of war and turn resolutely towards the integral and integrated development of our peoples.

The efforts to contain and resolve the many conflicts that continue to shake the African continent are very instructive. First of all, the African countries and the African Union have shown their political will and their resolve to manage their own problems, despite an obvious shortage of resources. Therefore, it is time to call for the substantial strengthening of international support provided to the African Union and for much more active cooperation between the African Union and the United Nations on conflict prevention and the restoration of peace. Moreover, the various approaches have shown us that the quest for peace must be inclusive, not deliberately excluding anyone. That is a sensible and productive approach.

Such joint action is something we hope the Organization can do — particularly now, when multilateralism seems to be recovering from recent difficult ordeals. We must therefore remain united to preserve the cherished ideals bequeathed to us by the founders of the United Nations and enthusiastically reaffirmed in the Millennium Declaration.

A much more cohesive and shared action under the banner of the United Nations is thus essential at the present time, marked by the complexity of the challenges we are called to face, such as nebulous international terrorism, which is more of a threat to peace, stability and the safety of our borders than ever before; the risk of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons; and prostitution and the illicit trade in human persons, whose effects are both cruel and devastating to human rights, particularly children's rights.

Cohesion undoubtedly implies a carefully planned effort. In that regard, we welcome the Secretary-General's initiative to establish a High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change. Its conclusions will serve as beacons to us as we seek to humanize international relations and to promote a world of solidarity and development compatible with the environment.

The complexity of the current challenges justifies — now more than ever before — the urgent, long-awaited reform of the Organization. We welcome the steps already taken to streamline the working methods of the General Assembly and the reforms already initiated within the Secretariat with a view to adapting the Organization's internal structures and culture to new expectations and challenges. We hope that the same dynamic will be applied to Security Council reform so that it will soon become a reality.

Attaining the Millennium Development Goals is a challenge for us all. Experts suggest that the efforts already undertaken are not equal to the task. Therefore, we must sharpen our focus by mobilizing more of the necessary resources.

Our moral and historic responsibility to future generations is particularly great in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Entire families have been decimated, millions of children have been orphaned and elderly persons are abandoned, alone and defenceless. It is the family structure that is disintegrating, and that is horrible to see. It is our common responsibility to unite our forces to wipe out this pandemic, which knows no borders and threatens the very survival of the human race. We have no right to fail.

In the economic area, we know the unbearable situation of the peoples in the least developed countries, who are trapped in abject poverty. In that regard, my delegation urges the international community to work together in implementing the Brussels Programme of Action. From that perspective, debt relief, more flexible conditions for joining the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative, an increase in official development assistance and the opening up of international markets deserve careful attention.

The international community cannot remain indecisive on the issue of agricultural subsidies in industrialized countries that distort the rules of the game of free competition and considerably reduce the opportunities for poor countries to develop.

Africa has enormous natural resources, yet poverty, diseases and suffering of every kind ravage it more than they do other continents. By forming the New Partnership for Africa's Development, Africans have committed themselves to promoting good political and economic governance — a prerequisite for sustainable development. The priorities are already identified, sector by sector, and the subregional structures are being further strengthened. Yet the success of the efforts currently under way will depend not only on the resolve of Africans themselves, but also on the level of solidarity offered by the international community.

The twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century have witnessed important forums in which the world's leaders have made decisive commitments in various areas affecting human security, in the profound sense of the term. Those commitments, which have given rise to much hope throughout the world, have been implemented only partially. It is our hope that the high-level plenary meeting scheduled for 2005 will be able to breathe new life into the implementation of the commitments made, for the happiness and prosperity of present and future generations.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Burundi for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Domitien Ndayizeye, President of the Republic of Burundi, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Boniface Alexandre, Interim President of the Republic of Haiti

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Interim President of the Republic of Haiti.

Mr. Boniface Alexandre, Interim President of the Republic of Haiti, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Boniface Alexandre, Interim President of the Republic of Haiti, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Alexandre (*spoke in French*): It is a pleasure for me, on behalf of the people and the Government of Haiti and on my own behalf, to express to you, Sir, my heartfelt congratulations on your election on 10 June to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth regular session. The outstanding qualities that have won you this distinction undoubtedly constitute a guarantee that our work will progress well. I am convinced that advances will be made in the search for viable and lasting solutions to the different problems confronting the international community. I also wish to express our gratitude to Minister Julian Hunte of Saint Lucia, whose far-sightedness and sense of balance gave decisive weight to his initiatives to give new dynamics to the work of the General Assembly during the last session.

I also want to pay tribute to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, and to reiterate to him, on behalf of the Haitian people, our deepest

appreciation for the constant interest that he has shown in Haiti. This is also an opportunity for me to express to you, Mr. President, and to the United Nations family my deepest thanks for the expressions of sympathy towards — and solidarity with — the Haitian people, once again struck by terrible floods on 18 and 19 September 2004.

Since 1945, our Organization has given proof of its capacity for survival and renewal. Nonetheless, the recent course of events in certain parts of the world is of constant concern. The imposing of terror as a form of political expression is completely unacceptable. In this regard, Haiti endorses the relevant resolutions of the Security Council. The spiral of violence, which tragically affects civilian populations here and elsewhere, is an attack on human dignity and on the culture of peace that the United Nations embodies. The United Nations must necessarily play its role in the forefront, in accordance with the United Nations Charter, in the settlement of disputes that threaten international peace and security. The Republic of Haiti wishes to reaffirm its commitment to the ideals and to the principles of universality of our Organization and to the objectives of peace and development to be attained through international cooperation.

While the Republic of Haiti celebrates, this year, the bicentenary of its independence, it has had to request the solidarity of the United Nations to help in the stabilization of the situation in the country, following the events of 29 February 2004. The Haitian people express their appreciation to the Security Council, which, at my request, gave the international community the mandate to help Haiti in the process of political transition by virtue of Security Council resolutions 1529 (2004) and 1542 (2004).

Seven months after the major political events that took place in Haiti, I have come here to bear witness to the hopes that democratic renewal is inspiring in the Haitian population. I am also here to say, on behalf of the Haitian people and their Government, that the Republic of Haiti has never felt as close to the principles and the objectives of the United Nations, which, at the height of our distress, showed its interest in a future of freedom, democracy and collective well-being in Haiti.

On 29 February 2004, in accordance with the principles of the Haitian Constitution and in my capacity as Chief Justice of our Supreme Court, I took my oath as interim President of the Republic. Fifteen days later, a Government of transition was established, with the participation of the political and social forces of the country. The transition over which I am presiding is designed to be inclusive. The democratic process has begun. Political parties are forming, and others are reorganizing themselves. A constant and fruitful dialogue has begun between the authorities of the State, the political class and civil society organizations in the country. In that same spirit, a mutually satisfactory agreement was reached on 18 September between the Government authorities and the representatives of the demobilized military. This thus spared the nation a bloodbath and a pointless fratricidal struggle.

I pledged, before the Haitian nation, to put an end to the political transition that dated back some 20 years. May this transition put an end to the transition. General elections will be organized in 2005. The Government resolutely supports this process, and, on 7 February 2006, I must and will hand power over to a democratically elected President.

I thank those States that made the deployment of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) possible, particularly those that have made or will make contingents available to the mission. I invite MINUSTAH to work more closely with the Haitian authorities for genuine disarmament in the country. It is not admissible that armed groups commit their misdeeds with impunity, without being the least disturbed by the presence of MINUSTAH. The Haitian national police is steadily strengthening. The transitional Government counts on international cooperation to make that strengthening not only quantitative, but qualitative, in terms of training and equipment.

Without the active and sustained support of the international community, the objectives of the transitional Government might not be achieved. That failure would mean a return to anarchy and chaos in Haiti and would be a grave setback to the United Nations.

However, Haiti has a fresh look. All freedoms are guaranteed, international commitments are respected and justice again prevails. Unfortunately, the Government of Haiti and its intentions were recently questioned, following a verdict in which no member of the executive branch had any role whatsoever, and that,

in accordance with the Constitution and the laws of the Republic.

The necessary reform of the Haitian judicial system is clearly an imperative. But it is fundamentally unjust to blame the present Government of brazen interference in judiciary proceedings or to systematically bleed magistrates and the civil servants in charge of establishing the law.

The Government of Haiti is extremely sensitive to the comments and remarks of its friends and partners with whom it is cooperating in all fields of political, economic and social governance; but it refuses to be associated with or connected to decisions that involve only one organ of the State, which acted completely independently, even if those decisions might raise certain questions.

What must not be forgotten is that I am still President of the Court of Appeals, provisionally exercising the function of President of the Republic. Therefore, I cannot tolerate any arbitrary action, nor can I tolerate any interference of the political authority in the judiciary system. Justice must be independent.

Guaranteeing security, promoting freedom and human dignity, promoting economic growth and social development, preparing the provisional electoral council for the holding of honest, credible and clean elections — those are the objectives that the Government of Haiti intends to achieve through its programme of action, within the current climate of exceptional difficulties.

For that reason, I make a solemn appeal from this rostrum to the international community, to friendly countries, to the specialized agencies of the United Nations system, and to all of those for whom solidarity is not just word that special attention, beyond symbolic gestures, be given to the Republic of Haiti so that a substantial and well-directed cooperative effort may help mobilize the necessary resources, with a view to immediate and long-term action, and may promote the return of sustained growth in Haiti following years of stagnation.

The people of Haiti are starting anew, and it is natural that at this time they should turn to the United Nations. Based upon the values and objectives that we share, Haiti seeks the understanding of its natural partners so that it can at last break the infernal cycle of violence and isolation in which it has lived for too long.

The President *(spoke in French)*: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Interim President of the Republic of Haiti for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Boniface Alexandre, Interim President of the Republic of Haiti, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Oscar Berger Perdomo, President of the Republic of Guatemala

The President *(spoke in French)*: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Guatemala.

Mr. Oscar Berger Perdomo, President of the Republic of Guatemala, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Mr. Oscar Berger Perdomo, President of the Republic of Guatemala, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Perdomo (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to begin by expressing our appreciation to Mr. Julian Hunte, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Saint Lucia, for his accomplished and skilful leadership of the General Assembly during its previous session.

I would also like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session.

I would also like to commend the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for the great wisdom that he has shown in the discharge of his functions. He deserves our respect and appreciation, and we extend to him our support and solidarity.

My country has reached a crucial point in its history. It faces the challenge of living up to the expectations raised by the end of the internal armed conflict. Since January, when I assumed office, the frustrated hopes of all of our people have been rekindled.

My plan of government is predicated on the peace agreements and defines their implementation as a commitment of the whole nation. As President of

Guatemala, I endorse fully the principle that a firm and lasting peace must be based on participatory socio-economic development, aimed at achieving the common good and responding to the needs of all of our people, particularly those still living in extreme poverty.

Since I took office, I have made a point of listening to the opinions of all of our citizens. That has enabled me to identify the constraints facing Guatemala, which it must overcome if it is to deal adequately with the many legitimate social demands and expectations.

The actions that my Government intends to take in the period 2004 to 2008 will focus on four areas: social investment; conditions of production; environmental sustainability; and security for all. Those policies are being carried out within the framework of the principles of solidarity and inclusiveness; decentralization and participation; and transparency in public actions. Those areas of action and principles accord fully with the Millennium Development Goals.

I would like to single out a number of achievements resulting from our new approach to government. We have reduced our troop strength by 43 per cent and have begun to modernize the armed forces and to make them more professional, consistent with the functions that they are required to perform in time of peace. This includes, at the international level, greater participation by the Guatemalan army in United Nations peace operations, for example in Haiti.

In terms of public spending, we are according priority to education, health, security, citizenship and infrastructure.

We are fighting petty crime, gang-related crime and organized crime, focusing in particular on combating drug trafficking, terrorism, smuggling, money laundering, trafficking in persons and the illegal arms trade, all of which represent a huge challenge that cannot be overcome without the support of the international community.

We are waging an all-out war against corruption, and creating mechanisms to ensure transparency in public procurement and contracting. For the first time in the history of our country, charges of corruption are being investigated, and those found guilty will be prosecuted.

We have adopted a series of measures aimed at elaborating and implementing a fiscal pact. Sustained efforts are being made to meet the taxation goals set out in the peace agreements, within the framework of my Government's objectives for economic growth.

We have, as a matter of priority, established a national front against hunger and malnutrition. Working with civil society, we have elaborated a policy on food and nutritional security.

We have consolidated our responsible approach to macroeconomic management; that is necessary if we are to promote competitiveness and productive investment and ensure the well-being of all Guatemalans. In this context, we launched a programme for economic and social recovery, entitled *Vamos Guatemala.*

We have taken firm measures to eliminate extreme poverty and reduce social exclusion, while fully respecting our diversity — for Guatemala is a multi-ethnic, multicultural and multilingual country.

My Government is committed to full respect for human rights. We believe that every Guatemalan should enjoy basic rights and fundamental freedoms, and that the right to development must be ensured. In this context, Guatemala will cooperate with international bodies that promote and protect human rights.

My Government's foreign policy is consistent with its national interests. Our guiding principle is the need to ensure that Guatemala can take its proper place in today's globalized world, as well as to strengthen multilateralism and regional integration.

The presidents of the Central American countries have given greater impetus to our integration process. This year, we took the decisions required to bring to fruition a customs union between El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Guatemala.

My Government is proposing a new beginning in its bilateral relationship with Belize. We must reach a permanent, just, equitable and honourable settlement of the territorial dispute between the two countries, while at the same time making a constructive effort to resolve the socio-economic problems afflicting our peoples. That is why my Government is promoting joint projects relating to production, a trade agreement, greater flexibility in the transit of persons, goods and services, full observance of human rights and the

conclusion of agreements for mutual legal assistance, all of which will contribute to the progress of our peoples and to the security of the region.

The Central American countries have just concluded trade negotiations with the United States. Last May, at the Guadalajara Summit, an announcement was made regarding the initiation of a process leading up to an association agreement between Central America and the European Union, to include a free trade agreement. We will shortly be signing a trade agreement with Colombia, and we hope to conclude free trade agreements with Taiwan, MERCOSUR, the Andean Group and the Caribbean Community.

Looking after the interests of Guatemalan emigrants is also a priority issue for my Government. We provide support for them as they seek solutions to their problems and respect for their fundamental rights. We are in contact with the receiving countries, particularly the United States of America, with a view to regularizing the situation of emigrants, who make a substantial contribution to the well-being of their communities.

All the efforts that Guatemala is making to overcome poverty and achieve socio-economic development necessarily depend on the progress being made in multilateral trade negotiations. Guatemala appeals to the international community to fulfil its longstanding commitments to eliminate all the measures and practices that distort markets, to liberalize trade in our products and, more generally, to adopt measures enabling a country like Guatemala, which has been striving to open its economy, to obtain better opportunities for access to markets for its exports.

May I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA), which, after 10 years of fruitful work, is reaching the end of its mandate. MINUGUA has left an important legacy in our country.

I would like to turn now to our agenda at this session. We are convinced of the need to adapt the Organization to the new challenges, threats and changes that humanity faces. We trust that 2005 will offer us an opportunity to react to them in a responsible manner.

One of the most timely issues is the reform of the Security Council. Our position thereon has been evolving, reflecting the imperative need to make that organ more representative, transparent and effective. We advocate the expansion of its membership and could agree to such an expansion being applied to both categories of members — permanent and non-permanent — so long as the need to ensure adequate geographic representation is taken into account. The reform of the Security Council would be the point of departure for the adaptation of all the organs of the United Nations to the new circumstances. We favour the strengthening of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council.

We reiterate our complete repudiation of all forms of terrorism. We are taking all feasible measures at the national level against the scourge and support the collective action of the international community to combat it, inter alia, through the implementation of Security Council resolutions 1373 (2001) and 1390 (2002), as well as participation in the relevant treaties.

We are convinced of the need for a stronger collective capacity to prevent and resolve conflicts. We believe that the United Nations should continue to address the imperative of development, including such emerging issues as transnational migrations. We also feel that our Organization should play a vital role in seeking to ensure that the benefits of globalization are widely distributed among all countries. In that connection, we wish to highlight the significance we attach to the Monterrey Consensus and the Johannesburg Plan of Action.

Guatemala is conscious of the divisions that persist in the Middle East, Asia and Africa among neighbouring countries. We earnestly hope that the disputes between them can be resolved through dialogue and other peaceful means, thus enabling all peoples of the world to be represented here without rejection or discrimination.

I wish to note in particular our concern over the situation of the 23 million inhabitants of the Republic of China on Taiwan, whose aspirations to representation in international bodies remain unfulfilled. We also wish to voice our earnest hope that the difficult situation prevailing in the Middle East, which has deteriorated of late, will be resolved in conformity with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002) and 1402 (2002).

Under your guidance, Sir, this Assembly will have to address issues of the greatest significance for humankind and the United Nations. Guatemala undertakes to participate actively in this year's debates and in the special event to be held just before our next regular session. We hasten to offer our cooperation with a view to the success of your endeavours.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Guatemala for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Oscar Berger Perdomo, President of the Republic of Guatemala, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Elías Antonio Saca González, President of the Republic of El Salvador

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of El Salvador.

Mr. Elías Antonio Saca González, President of the Republic of El Salvador, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Elías Antonio Saca González, President of the Republic of El Salvador, and to invite him to address the General Assembly.

President Saca González (*spoke in Spanish*): It is my great honour to represent the Salvadoran people as I address the United Nations, the supreme global forum, for the first time.

I wish to convey my sincerest congratulations to you, Sir, on your election to coordinate the work of this session. We also thank Mr. Julian Hunte for his outstanding leadership of the last session of the General Assembly.

To the Secretary-General, we reiterate our admiration and our respect for his leadership in the fulfilment of the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter at a time when the Organization is confronting growing and complex global challenges affecting international peace and security.

Internal and international conflicts, terrorism and transnational organized crime, the persistence of extreme poverty, environmental deterioration and unresolved development problems are global in nature and require a harmonizing centre that can support the efforts of the international community to find shared and consensual solutions in order to establish an international order that responds to the needs and aspirations of humankind.

That integrating centre must be the United Nations. We therefore support the establishment of the panel of eminent persons to make recommendations on collective security and the strengthening of multilateralism in order more effectively to confront global challenges.

Irrational and criminal terrorist acts have highlighted the need for us to unite in our efforts and our determination, regardless of the differences that may exist among States, to unify our views and adopt collective action to find ways to confront the phenomenon and its causes, in the framework of respect for international law.

The delegation of El Salvador reaffirms its full conviction that global terrorism is not an issue between cultures or nations. From that perspective, the Government of El Salvador has decided to respond to the United Nations appeal by participating in the work of reconstruction and humanitarian assistance in Iraq.

By its very nature, our presence in Iraq deserves an additional explanation. We are not there for military reasons. Ours is a considered response to the appeal launched by this Organization for the international community to help in the transition phase leading to the full establishment of authority based on the free will of the Iraqi people, with absolute respect for its territorial integrity, its own culture and its unquestionable right to define its own destiny.

El Salvador suffered a long internal war and succeeded, with the support of the international community and the United Nations, in achieving lasting peace. We believe that the time has come to make our testimony and accumulated experience, both during the political negotiations for peace and the peace-building phase, available to other peoples.

El Salvador reiterates its firm and resolute support for peace-building and peacekeeping operations, above all because we have enjoyed the benefits of such an operation, but also, of course, because of their positive results in various regions of

the world. On the basis of that conviction, our country has signed a memorandum of understanding with the United Nations, the best evidence of El Salvador's commitment to such activities, which are so necessary in today's complex and unquiet world. We have presented a list of resources that are available to the world Organization as a basis for our participation in future operations, in addition to those in which we are already participating.

In that context, in order to demonstrate our spirit of cooperation on these issues, I am pleased to announce my Government's interest in submitting its candidacy for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council so as to make our accumulated experience available to this Organization.

Since the successful conclusion of our internal conflict, El Salvador has focused its attention resolutely on human development. The Government I lead, by dint of a broad majority vote of the Salvadoran people on 1 June, is one of openness and inclusion, with a vision of national integration and service to the interests and aspirations of our people. Such vital questions as security, employment, the effective improvement of basic services and the productivity of our communities and regions are the top priorities of our governing programme.

We are focusing on transforming national education, on reshaping public health care, on significantly strengthening the rule of law, on combating crime in all its manifestations and at all levels, on reactivating the economy and on making Salvadoran society internationally competitive. Insofar as we achieve greater progress domestically, we will be competitive externally.

In addition, however, we are working on a social plan geared towards reducing extreme poverty in the next five years. To that end, we are undertaking a tax reform that will increase tax collection and reduce evasion, allowing us to obtain the additional funds necessary to implementing our social plan. We shall levy a special tax on tobacco, alcohol, weapons and ammunition in order to promote a special health care fund with which we will expand health assistance to the rural areas of our country and undermine the black market in those goods.

In the approximately 100 days that we have been in office, we have undertaken important health reforms by extending medical coverage to the age of 12 for the children of workers who contribute to Salvadoran social security and by granting emergency paediatric services to almost 400,000 boys and girls.

We know that no Government effort will be effective without the cooperation of all sectors in our country. We are therefore launching a mechanism of understanding with all our political and social forces. In that context, we have established an employment agreement that seeks solutions, together with private enterprise, for strengthening the agriculture, construction, tourism and micro-, small and medium-sized business sectors, with the aim of generating more jobs.

One of the best mechanisms for increasing our development potential is investment in education. In that awareness, we have launched the National Education Plan 2021, which seeks to reinvigorate our vision of the future of education through short-, medium- and long-term programmes. We hope that our national effort will also enjoy international cooperation. That is why we were pleased by the decision taken by the Government of Spain to provide assistance for primary education.

The most urgent of the challenges confronting Salvadoran society is that of providing security to our citizens. In order to meet that need, we recently established a rural police force, along with a uncompromising plan to eradicate delinquency in urban areas overrun by gangs. The plan also offers special programmes for young people who wish to abandon the path of crime.

El Salvador unreservedly shares the interests expressed at the International Conference on Financing for Development. We reiterate our dedication to seeking alternative ways and means and renewed commitments to making the fight on poverty more effective — an objective that is interlinked with peace and security in the modern world.

In that vein, we welcome the initiative of Brazil, France, Chile and Spain confirming the need, in the fight against hunger and poverty, for greater and more effective efforts to place stability and global security on a solid foundation. If we all apply our will and commitment, we can develop new programmes and identify innovative public policies that will allow us to achieve the Millennium Goals.

Throughout its history, El Salvador has been a country of emigration. The flow of emigration was intensified by the war, and today virtually one third of our population lives abroad. Maintaining and deepening links with the country of origin is one of the main policies of our administration. Our national reality requires us to integrate the views of Salvadorans abroad with local expectations. The economic impact of this phenomenon is decisive to our life as a nation, but equally or even more important is the sociological and cultural impact of the situation. The phenomenon of transculturization experienced by our society is changing El Salvador forever.

The contribution of migrants to their countries of origin and to their host countries deserves special attention from the international community, and particularly from the specialized agencies of the United Nations system. The transfer of remittances is a key element in the mobilization of resources for the eradication of poverty and the attainment of the Millennium Goals. The reduction of the cost of remittances should be a concern of the international community. From that standpoint, I am pleased to express our great interest in participating actively in the high-level dialogue on international migration and development, to be held in 2006.

We welcome the United States proposal to create a fund for democracy. In the same vein, El Salvador welcomes the General Assembly's proclamation of 2005 as the International Year of Microcredit. The proclamation can promote the strengthening of micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises, which represent a broad spectrum of the social fabric and help sustain national progress.

In today's world, globalization has put us all on the map of international reality. It promotes the dynamic of strategic alliances in trade and all other fields, and makes it possible to build models for development by comparing them with other experiences. Gradually and in a balanced manner, we have decided to strengthen our links of cooperation with various developed countries. The prevailing regionalization makes us all dependent on one another. In the case of countries such as ours, the situation leads us to nurture our energies and creativity, open markets, promote financial flows, facilitate the transfer of technology and encourage competitiveness. These are major opportunities and challenges that we must all accept.

While cooperation for development remains fundamental, El Salvador reiterates the urgent need for a system of multilateral trade that is open, fair, rule-based, foreseeable and non-discriminatory, in accordance with the objectives of the Millennium Declaration.

In a world that is becoming increasingly globalized and therefore increasingly interdependent, economic phenomena affect us all in a chain reaction. The current international energy situation has a significant impact on the economies of our countries, with a negative effect on the dynamics of growth and progress. Thus, from this United Nations rostrum we strongly urge that we explore, as an organized community, not only short-term avenues for overcoming the crises, but also structural remedies that can help the most vulnerable countries, in particular. It is contradictory to talk about combating poverty and hunger while the consumer countries are paying such high prices for petroleum.

The complex Palestinian-Israeli conflict is a source of enormous concern to our country, given the incessant violence, the lack of control over terrorist groups and the ever-growing difficulty of returning to dialogue and political understanding. Our country reiterates, as it has done consistently, its support for any effort and measure to open space for a negotiated political solution that takes into account the legitimate interests of the parties directly involved.

As for the Republic of China on Taiwan, that is a case which the community of nations must examine in the light of international realities. Resolution 2758 (XXVI) of 1971 did not resolve the issue of the representation of the Taiwanese people in the United Nations. That nation has developed politically, economically and socially in an independent, free and democratic way. It has its own institutions and characteristics, just like any other State of the international community. However, Taiwan's situation in the international community is exceptional, because its absence from this forum is a denial of the exercise of the rights that are recognized to other peoples and of the universal and democratic nature of our Organization. Our delegation therefore supports consideration of the exceptional situation of the population of the Republic of China on Taiwan and its eventual participation in this forum and other international organizations.

Our Organization has played, is playing and will continue to play a decisive role in maintaining the world's healthy balance. Reality is changing constantly. Many things have been left behind and many things await us. Institutions in all areas and at all levels must evolve with the changing times. In that vein, we associate ourselves with those who are committed to the structural renewal of the United Nations. We believe that such reform must encompass the highest structures, including the Security Council.

Every year, the nations of the world, through their representatives, attend this rendezvous with the destiny of the world. We have the responsibility to do nothing less than to build a better world for current and future generations. Every word, every gesture and every decision made or reached here must be aimed at that lofty purpose. Only if we combine our efforts can a new, safer, fairer, more peaceful and more sharing reality emerge. Together with all the nations represented here, El Salvador takes up the challenge of joining in that concert of constructive wills, in the confidence that the god of nations will illuminate and encourage us so that we may fulfil his will for peace and brotherhood in a world in which no one is left behind.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of El Salvador for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Elias Antonio Saca González, President of the Republic of El Salvador, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Charles Gyude Bryant, Chairman of the National Transitional Government of the Republic of Liberia

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Chairman of the National Transitional Government of the Republic of Liberia.

Mr. Charles Gyude Bryant, Chairman of the National Transitional Government of the Republic of Liberia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Charles Gyude Bryant, Chairman of the National Transitional Government of the Republic of Liberia, and to invite him to address the General Assembly.

Chairman Bryant: It is an honour for me to stand here today to address the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session.

When, in 1945, Liberia joined the efforts to establish this Organization in order to bring an end to a global war and to pursue justice and maintain world peace, little did we know that we had subscribed to an insurance policy that, 59 years later, would provide coverage for Liberia and redeem its people and its sovereignty.

As members know, Liberia is a country in transition from continued crisis to sustainable peace. The United Nations, the United States and the European Union have all worked with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to stabilize the situation, attending to the humanitarian crisis and navigating the difficult road to peace. We remain immensely grateful for the role of South Africa and ECOWAS for providing regional leadership in the search for peace in Liberia. The pivotal roles played by both the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the Republic of Ghana deserve special commendation. We are particularly grateful to Secretary-General Annan and the United Nations, the United States and the European Union for partnering with ECOWAS in these endeavours.

I am pleased to inform this Assembly that the Comprehensive Peace Agreement singed in Ghana in August 2003 continues to guide the Liberian peace process. A power-sharing National Transitional Government comprising all warring factions, political parties, and civil society is working. The ceasefire agreement signed on June 17, 2003, continues to be insured by the 15,000-strong United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), operating with a Chapter VII mandate. The force is now disarming and demobilizing all armed groups.

At the beginning of the United Nations Mission in October 2003, we estimated that some 38,000 combatants would have submitted themselves to the disarmament and demobilization program. Today, 73,600 fighters have been disarmed. Over 22,000 pieces of serviceable weapons of all kinds have been surrendered and decommissioned, and more than

5 million rounds of ammunition collected and destroyed by UNMIL.

Meanwhile, the high number of combatants disarmed and demobilized has overwhelmed our capacity to rehabilitate and reintegrate them. The absence of social infrastructures exacerbates the situation. War-related damage to the national infrastructures and community facilities is extensive. Without exception, all communities have lost their capacity to accommodate and support even the slightest caseload of returnees.

Some of the ex-combatants have enrolled in civil works programmes sponsored by UNMIL, the European Commission, the United States Agency for International Development and the People's Republic of China. A significant number are seeking readmission into regular academic programmes. Others are enrolling in vocational training institutions to acquire life skills.

There are special efforts being made for children and female former fighters to receive specialized care and training through programmes sponsored by United Nations agencies and other international and local non-governmental organizations.

As a direct result of the civil conflict, a sizeable number of Liberians are currently residing outside of the country, mostly as refugees. As disarmament nears completion and as our Government extends its authority, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is preparing for organized repatriation of Liberians. In addition, some 500,000 internally displaced persons are expected to commence leaving their camps and returning to their local communities towards the end of October this year.

The role the United Nations is playing to bring sustainable peace and human dignity to our country and people is phenomenal and indicative of the new challenges which the United Nations and the international community must face and meet head on if we, the people of the United Nations, are to live in peace and enjoy our inalienable rights. Peace and the freedom to enjoy those rights under the rule of law require not just curative measures, but preventive actions to address the problems of poverty, ignorance and disease of the world's poorer peoples and countries.

The National Transitional Government's recovery agenda has as its focus the improvement of the well-being of our people by the creation of employment opportunities to put returnees and ex-combatants to work. Our recent history teaches us that when ex-combatants are not meaningfully rehabilitated and reintegrated and that when many in our society are not stakeholders and are excluded, we run the risk that they will return to violent crime and conflict. We are extremely worried about that prospect.

Against that background, there is now real urgency to revive our economy and create jobs. That is why, in June of this year, I pleaded with the Security Council to lift the sanctions imposed on diamonds and timber — two sectors that hold great potential for job creation and economic recovery. Sanctions continue to hurt Liberia. It must not be forgotten that the sanctions were imposed primarily because Liberia was exporting conflict by trafficking in arms for diamonds. A related reason was the lack of transparency and accountability in the management of State resources, especially from the forestry sector and the maritime programme. That situation no longer obtains.

Our Government is not buying arms. To the contrary, we are disarming tens of thousands of combatants. We are also cooperating with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, the African Development Bank, the European Commission and the United States Treasury and State Departments in putting into place proper mechanisms for transparency and accountability in the use of State resources.

In that regard, the European Commission is funding the systems audit of five revenue-generating agencies and the Central Bank of Liberia. The World Bank is working with the Government to reform the public procurement system and is assisting the Liberia Petroleum Refinery Corporation to put into place a system of international competitive bidding of petroleum products. The IMF is assisting the Central Bank to introduce transparency in the management of the foreign exchange regime. The United States Treasury Department is engaged with us in financial sector reforms, particularly in the areas of monetary policy, revenue enhancement, budgeting and expenditure controls. Also, the United States State Department is working with the Forestry Development Authority in implementing an environment-friendly forestry reform programme.

Given all these efforts, we once again appeal to the Security Council to lift the sanctions to enable us to create jobs and to attend to the enormous social needs of our people.

In early February, the United Nations, in collaboration with the World Bank and the United States Government, co-hosted a donors conference for Liberia. The aim of the conference was to seek support for our two-year reconstruction plan. The international community responded generously with pledges of $520 million. I am happy to report that, to date, $455 million of those pledges have been classified as firm commitments. Projects are under way to spend those funds and to bring much needed relief to our people.

Elections in Liberia are not new, but most have been characterized by widespread rigging. Thus, unfair elections in themselves have been a major source of conflict in Liberia. This time around, Liberians are determined to undertake free and fair elections as an equity participation in the investment of sustainable peace and national renewal. The Transitional Government remains committed to the holding of elections in October 2005 and to the smooth transfer of power to a democratically elected Government in January 2006.

Liberia has developed strong collaborative efforts with our neighbours in the Mano River Union to end the activities of armed non-State actors. The Mano River Union countries have committed themselves to strictly adhering to the Non-Aggression and Security Cooperation Treaty of the Union and the meticulous implementation of the fifteenth protocol. Liberia reiterates its commitment to cooperating with all provisions on security and peace as enshrined in the charters of the United Nations, the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States and the Mano River Union.

We call on the United Nations to urgently engage in crisis prevention and in strengthening the peace in our region. In that regard, we urge this body to work with regional and subregional organizations, such as the African Union and ECOWAS.

Today more than ever before, the utility of the United Nations is being tested. Never before has the world faced so many different types of conflicts in so many different places at the same time. However, we are encouraged by the fact that the high number and complexity of those problems have not lessened the determination of Member States to stay the course of fostering international peace and stability.

The threat posed by global terrorism, combined with widespread poverty, especially in developing countries, constitutes a real barrier to the attainment of the Millennium Goals.

The continued existence of conflicts in the Middle East provides a source of worry. After decades, it is time that a workable solution be found to the Israeli-Palestinian issue.

The current Iraqi crisis is also troubling to a world body searching for solutions to world conflicts. Liberia calls for a unified global approach to the Iraqi question and urges the United Nations to play an active role in the resolution of that crisis.

In Africa, news from the Darfur region in Sudan is frightening. We support the position of the African Union on the Darfur problem and ask for a speedy resolution of the crisis so as to bring relief to the region.

The recent massacre of nearly 200 Tutsi in Burundi sends a grim reminder of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. Urgent action should be taken to contain the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Making peace is difficult because the resolution of conflicts sometimes engenders new contradictions that must be addressed. In post-conflict situations like ours, where national capacities have been decimated, the continued goodwill of the international community to assist in reconstruction is paramount. We thus pray for the continued engagement of the United Nations in global crises.

Liberia has gone through 15 years of violent conflicts. In Accra, Ghana, in 2003, Liberians reasoned together to reject war and build a better society. Liberia is now breaking through from being a failed State to being a democratic and vibrant society. There is now a growing sense of hope and optimism among our people. We cannot fail now, for we have seen the cost of war as compared to the price of peace. Liberians have finally resolved to choose the path of peace and stay on it.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Chairman of the National Transitional Government of the Republic of Liberia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Charles Gyude Bryant, Chairman of the National Transitional Government of the Republic of Liberia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Carlos Mesa Gisbert, President of the Republic of Bolivia

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Bolivia.

Mr. Carlos Mesa Gisbert, President of the Republic of Bolivia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (spoke in French): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Carlos Mesa Gisbert, President of the Republic of Bolivia, and to invite him to address the General Assembly.

President Mesa Gisbert (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of Bolivia, I wish to express a concern that is global: the issue of terrorism. A world that is haunted by terrorism is an insecure world, one whose prospects are threatened. Bolivia believes that the fight against terrorism is one of the most important tasks we need to undertake together. The incident in Beslan in the Russian Federation demonstrates how far it is possible to go in brutal actions that are entirely divorced from any sense of humanity.

The fight against terrorism must also be linked to the struggle against other scourges of concern to us all. In that context, Bolivia affirms its most resolute commitment to the fight against drug trafficking, which in our country is being waged through the eradication of excess coca, undertaken with respect for the nation's tradition of consumption. That joint task could not be fulfilled without the presence and support of the international community and in the context of shared responsibility. Shared responsibility requires clear action to be taken on both sides of the chain of production to eliminate the scourge of drug trafficking. Shared responsibility requires the social and the economic issues to be considered when addressing the problem.

Bolivia has elaborated the idea of alternative development, which we would wish to see converted into comprehensive development. In other words, the participation of the communities and villages where coca is produced in Bolivia should be part of the decision-making process and of the design of strategies to modify current practices of cultivation and to generate reasonable economic options, to open markets, and to reduce the costs of intervention to the international community in the eradication of coca, and in particular in the process of seeking viable alternative ways for the Bolivian economy.

We believe that the fight against the scourges that are currently stalemating humankind could not be waged without a multilateral response to the challenges to modern society. We firmly believe in multilateralism and strongly support the United Nations as the arena of that multilateralism. We are convinced that the time has come to produce a series of comprehensive reforms in the Organization as a whole. That would require, inter alia, an expansion of the Security Council at the onset of a new historic era. As the challenges have changed, so too must the responses.

In that context, we are convinced that another aspect to be thoroughly reviewed is the paradigm of global development, which is unsustainable over time and will not allow for long-term responses, but which will instead generate complex problems that cannot be resolved. A change in the development paradigm requires openness of mind and a heterodox capacity to respond to the basic parameters in which the world economy functions today, without demagogic responses or utopian solutions. On the contrary, we need to ponder such issues as hunger, poverty and exclusion, which afflict millions of human beings on our planet.

This is a good opportunity to recall that, over the past year, Bolivia has experienced a particularly difficult situation. In October 2003, a social, political and economic crisis pushed our nation to the brink of confrontation and violence, with unforeseeable consequences. The crisis threatened all of our institutions, and in particular our democratic system. The Bolivian response to that crisis was issued peacefully, in respect for democracy, through a mechanism of constitutional succession that allowed me, as Vice-President, to take office as President and to assume the enormous challenges to the country in order to restore order, peace and the prospects and hopes of our society.

Why did this crisis occur in Bolivia? It happened because of an accumulation of historic arrears that, at some point, had to be paid for by our society. Those arrears included exclusion, discrimination, a vision of Bolivian society rife with racism, and truly dreadful poverty. The efforts undertaken by the country on the basis of a liberal economic model and of a structural adjustment model had their highs and lows. Positive results allowed for macroeconomic stability, but genuinely inadequate results in the social sphere were the outcome primarily of exhaustion and the need for different responses. All of those historical arrears fell due in October, leading to a popular upheaval that ended in social turmoil, calling not only for a short-term response — ours, I believe, was effective in that democracy and peace were preserved — but also and above all for a forward-looking solution.

What are the major challenges facing Bolivia today in its geographical, historical and geopolitical contexts? It must first resolve its own conflict between society and State and the challenges of its own economic growth. One of the country's key issues was the definition of an energy policy once we learned that our nation has one of the largest reserves of natural gas in South America.

We chose a path that was difficult, yet attractive, and that marked our desire for democratic participation and participative democracy — please forgive the wordplay — within our society. We opted for a binding referendum in which the people of Bolivia were able to decide what they wished to do with their most important energy resources. The referendum highlighted our will to participate and to define our own destiny. It was successfully held on 18 July. It took place in a framework of peace, of democratic participation and of clear and convincing responses that allowed our Government to move forward with a hydrocarbons and natural gas policy that regulates export, industrialization and relations with investors and investment companies that are appropriate and useful to our nation.

In this forum, I wish to affirm our belief in a constructive and mutually beneficial relationship between private investors in Bolivia and the representatives of the State. Perhaps one of the most important lessons of recent years is that we must neither revert to the old system of State capitalism of the 1950s and 1960s, nor pursue the rigid orthodoxy of the liberal vision.

The answer for today is a practical combination within the false distinction between the market and the State. That distinction must be abolished and the combination made viable without exclusions and without jeopardizing the fundamental concept, in which we believe, that legal security is guaranteed by the rule of law. That is the path on which we have embarked as we work to adopt new hydrocarbons legislation.

Perhaps the most important thing for Bolivia in the coming months, however, is to reach a new social covenant. While the relationship between society and the State has been severely damaged and threatened by collapse, it is clear that the concept of democratic participation has to be reflected in that covenant through a constituent assembly, freely elected to define the outline of the country that we wish to build in the immediate future.

Given that my Government has no political party or organized presence in that context, we shall convene a constituent assembly that is truly pluralistic and in which the elements of our Magna Carta will be provided by various social sectors yet respond to a single basic concept: an end to exclusion and discrimination; the option — in a country where the majority is of indigenous Quechua, Aymara or Guaraní origin — for the majority to express itself; and the definition, in a democratic context and in the framework of distinct regions and distinct visions, of the profile of a viable nation.

I also wish to note that we achieved something very important after the crisis: the restoration of peace through transparent, honest and austere action that Bolivia urgently needed. This does not mean that the task is done. The struggle against corruption will always be a challenge in our country, as it is elsewhere in the world, but I believe that we have demonstrated a clear commitment that has given us credibility and legitimacy in our society.

Transparency, honesty and austerity are vital elements in a poor nation that must administer appropriately and efficiently the meagre resources at its disposal. In that context, I wish here at the United Nations to thank the international community, which was consistent and unified in its support for Bolivia during the crisis and in the following months, helping us to implement a consistent macroeconomic policy to resolve such serious issues as its heavy fiscal deficit.

Given its geographical location at the centre of our continent, Bolivia should be a pivotal country in the fast-paced process of integration. That process has two major protagonists: the Andean Community, of which we are a member, and the Southern Common Market, of which we are an associate member. At first, we were a "hinge" country, but we are now in the process of integration that will gradually encompass a large bloc of South American nations, which we welcome and towards which we are striving.

In that context of coordination and integration, Bolivia holds a key play in any process of infrastructure development. In energy, Bolivia is a country that can serve as South America's energy distribution hub. In telecommunications — fibre optics in particular — and, of course, in highway infrastructure, we are vital and must be an actor that facilitates rather than obstructs.

I wish to share a thought here with such multilateral entities as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and other organizations that are cooperating with Bolivia and other developing countries.

Because of its revenues and high level of debt, Bolivia has been considered to be a heavily indebted poor country. In theory, that has given it a series of advantages in debt servicing and, above all, in the channelling of that servicing not towards repayment, but towards social services. Paradoxically, however, this has limited the country's capacity to obtain non-concessional loans that would allow us to implement infrastructure projects that are of interest not only to Bolivia, but to all countries of the region.

We believe that we must begin to look differently at the way international organizations interpret those loans in order to make them more flexible and to avoid the paradox whereby an advantage becomes a burden that makes development impossible. We hope that this new approach will be grasped by the international community, and in particular by the multilateral organizations.

Lastly, I wish to broach a subject that we will always stress in our statements before the world community. Bolivia's landlocked status is a factor that has curbed our development. Bolivia was born as an independent country with a coastline on the Pacific Ocean. Today, we demand free, useful and sovereign access to that Ocean. Our demand has moral, historical and legal bases and is linked to the high economic cost that has made development difficult throughout our history. We make this demand, and I want to emphasize this, on the basis of a logic of construction — a logic of integration.

Chile and Bolivia are countries that complement each other. We are countries that have a destiny of shared development and integration. To fail to find a solution to the Bolivian issue is to negate the possibility of development and integration and prevent it from becoming a reality.

Bolivia is prepared to undertake an open dialogue in order to find an appropriate and definitive solution to the problem. That is all the more true today because South American integration is so close at hand, and because Bolivia's maritime problem has become an obstacle on the path to that integration.

We are expressing a rational, constructive desire — a will for integration. Our demand is unchanging and has profound relevance in the context of everything I said earlier.

I should like to conclude by stating here, before the nations of the world, that our country is one of peace that believes in disarmament. It believes also that we need to reflect on and change many of the paradigms which in the course of time have crystallized certain positions and have limited the open-mindedness that we need today, more than ever, in the twenty-first century, in order to face the challenges of the future.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Bolivia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Carlos Mesa Gisbert, President of the Republic of Bolivia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Kessai Note, President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

Mr. Kessai Note, President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Kessai Note, President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Note: I am honoured to address the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session on behalf of the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

Allow me to extend my congratulations to you, Mr. President, on your election, and to wish you well in your endeavours throughout this session.

This year has seen important landmarks for the Marshall Islands at the domestic level. On 1 May we celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of our Constitution. The same day also marked the entry into force of our amended Compact of Free Association with the United States. The renewal of that agreement reaffirms the special relationship between our two countries.

At the regional level, we continue to place great importance on our membership in the Pacific Islands Forum. Over the past year, the Forum has conducted a comprehensive review of existing regional mechanisms. Last month Pacific leaders met in Samoa, where they endorsed the terms of reference of a new Pacific Plan, which will develop a strategy for broader regional cooperation based on the key goals of economic growth, sustainable development, good governance and security.

At the international level, the Marshall Islands reaffirms its solidarity with the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), which continues to act as a powerful voice for small island developing States.

It has long been recognized that small island developing States suffer from unique vulnerabilities and disadvantages. In January 2005, the international community will meet in Mauritius to conduct the 10-year review of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. Over the past year, members of AOSIS have been engaged in a detailed process of preparation for the international meeting. At an interregional meeting in January, small island developing States adopted the AOSIS Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action, which addresses critical issues including climate change and sea-level rise, renewable energy, trade access and others.

It is vital that we maintain the momentum in the lead-up to Mauritius in order to ensure a successful outcome for small island developing States. I encourage the international community to become engaged in the ongoing preparatory process and to participate in the international meeting at the highest level. It is our fervent hope that the meeting will produce practical outcomes that will assist small island developing States in implementing the Programme of Action to benefit people at the local level.

In this increasingly globalized world, the Marshall Islands faces challenges shared by many other small island States. Our environment is extremely vulnerable to the effects of climate change and natural disasters; our small population faces the challenge of managing high levels of major diseases such as diabetes, and the risk of the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases; and our limited resource base and remoteness restrict our ability to integrate into the global economy.

With these challenges in mind, the Marshall Islands is particularly concerned about the following issues.

First, regarding sustainable development, the Marshall Islands has developed a national sustainable development strategy, and we are in the process of establishing a task force to ensure that the Millennium Development Goals are fully integrated into our national strategy. In striving to achieve internationally agreed development goals, we are severely constrained by our lack of human and technical resources. Thus we continue to seek to form partnerships that will assist us through capacity-building and technology transfer.

We were pleased that the twelfth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development focused on water, sanitation and human settlements. We in the Pacific region are working hard to improve access to fresh water and to develop environmentally responsible waste-management systems. We seek the support of the international community to assist us in the implementation of regional projects such as the Pacific Regional Action Plan on Sustainable Water Management. We look forward to the thirteenth session of the Commission's providing further policy guidance in these areas.

An ongoing issue of the utmost concern for the people of the Marshall Islands is that of nuclear-weapon testing. Between 1946 and 1958, the United States conducted a series of nuclear tests in the Marshall Islands, which included the detonation of 23 atomic and hydrogen bombs. On 1 March this year we commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of the Bravo test at Bikini atoll. The Bravo blast was 1,000 times more powerful than Hiroshima, and its fallout spread radioactive debris across the neighbouring islands.

Today, many of our people continue to suffer from the long-term health effects, while others remain displaced from their homes because of ongoing contamination. We urge the United States Government to fully address the issue of adequate compensation for populations affected by the nuclear testing programme and to fulfil its responsibilities regarding the safe resettlement of displaced populations.

On broader issues of disarmament and non-proliferation, we urge the international community to retain a focus on disarmament by the nuclear-weapon States, as well as on non-proliferation measures. We look forward to next year's Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and we hope that the Conference will produce substantial progress on the 13 steps towards complete nuclear disarmament.

I wish to reiterate our critical concern regarding climate change. Along with other low-lying island nations, we are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. We are already experiencing these dramatic effects: sea levels are rising, weather patterns are changing and coral reef systems are being harmed. Urgent action is needed at the global level to halt and ultimately reverse the devastating impact of climate change. Without such global action, our national efforts at sustainable development will ultimately be rendered meaningless.

While we are committed to playing our part, strong leadership is required by the major industrialized countries. We renew our support for the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol, and we call upon all States that have not yet done so — in particular the major emitters — to ratify the Protocol without further delay. We also call upon the international community to assist small island developing States in developing and implementing comprehensive adaptation strategies.

As a nation whose livelihood depends on the resources of the sea, we are becoming increasingly concerned about the state of the world's oceans and fish stocks. At the regional level, we cooperate closely with other members of the Pacific Islands Forum to ensure that the oceans and marine resources in our region are managed in a responsible and sustainable manner. The Pacific Islands Regional Ocean Policy, adopted in 2002, will be implemented throughout the region under a recently developed framework for integrated strategic action. Another notable achievement in the region is the entry into force of the Convention on the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean.

While such developments are encouraging, we reiterate our concerns regarding the prevalence of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. Like many other small island developing States, we rely on fisheries resources as a primary means of survival, yet we lack the capacity to adequately monitor our exclusive economic zone. Regional and international cooperation must focus on addressing the problem of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and assisting small island developing States by building capacity for monitoring and surveillance.

I have briefly mentioned a few of the major priorities for the Marshall Islands. There are, of course, many other important issues to be addressed during the upcoming session.

International terrorism is obviously one of the biggest challenges facing the global community today. The reality is that no State or region is immune. All States must take action at the national level and must cooperate at the regional and international levels to ensure that we combat terrorist threats with comprehensive and unified action. Within the Pacific region, we continue to cooperate closely to ensure that effective regional action is taken to combat threats to peace and security. At the national level, we are in the process of implementing the 12 core anti-terrorism conventions and the relevant Security Council resolutions, and we have taken many steps to combat money laundering and terrorist financing.

The Marshall Islands, as a State party to the Rome Statute, welcomes the ongoing progress of the International Criminal Court. We are pleased that the Court is now fully operational and has begun its first

investigations. We are confident that the Court will play a valuable role in the administration of justice at the international level, and we urge those States that have not yet done so to become parties.

Another issue requiring action by this body is the continued exclusion of Taiwan from the United Nations. Taiwan is a peace-loving, sovereign State, and only its democratically elected Government can be the legitimate representative of the interests of the people of Taiwan within the United Nations. The Marshall Islands reiterates its full support for the ongoing quest of the people of Taiwan to be granted membership in this global body and in various other international organizations.

Finally, the Marshall Islands reiterates its support for the expansion of the Security Council in both categories of membership. We support the allocation of a new permanent seat to Japan, and we believe that the representation on the Council of developing countries must be increased. Such expansion is crucial if the Council is to retain its legitimacy.

My delegation looks forward, Mr. President, to a productive session under your able leadership.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Kessai Note, President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Arnold Rüütel, President of the Republic of Estonia

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Estonia.

Mr. Arnold Rüütel, President of the Republic of Estonia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Arnold Rüütel, President of the Republic of Estonia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Rüütel (*spoke in Estonian; English text provided by the delegation*): First of all, allow me to congratulate you on your election to the office of the President of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly. I wish you every success and all the best in your very important work. I would also like to thank your predecessor, Mr. Julian Hunte, for his leadership of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session.

The current session is very significant for Estonia, since it is the first time ever that we participate at the General Assembly as a member State of the European Union and the NATO. We are therefore more aware than ever before of our shared responsibility for the world, but also of our vulnerability to global threats.

During the last few years, we have all witnessed new threats to world peace and security. We have also seen how these threats are all connected to economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems. The fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly focused on the situation in Iraq. However, securing peace and stability in the Middle East remains an ongoing concern. I hope that all of this has only deepened our conviction that the goals and principles of the United Nations Charter have not really lost their topicality but rather, are even more topical now. In today's world of new threats and changing global security, we need shared solutions more than ever before. The United Nations is the only organization established to coordinate, on a global scale, the efforts of States in safeguarding international stability and security. The United Nations has to be even more decisive and efficient in order to successfully fulfil its important responsibilities in this new situation.

The reduction of world poverty continues to be a central issue on the global development agenda; less poverty would certainly mean more international stability and security. The international community has made a commitment to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by the year 2015, halving poverty in the world by that time. That is a very optimistic promise indeed, and it assumes that all countries must perform even more purposefully and in an even more coordinated manner. High-level meetings in Doha, Monterrey and Johannesburg have shown us the way; now, we must act.

At the forthcoming 2005 summit, we will review our progress in fulfilling the goals set out in the Millennium Declaration. I would like to appeal to all of

us here to work so that we would be content with the conclusions in the interim report.

Together with other United Nations Member States, Estonia shares responsibility for balanced development in the world and makes its contribution towards achieving the common goals. Only recently, we were one of the recipient countries of international aid. Now that we are one of the donors, we are very much aware of how important it is that international aid be coordinated and harmonized. We began providing international aid in 1998. Time has shown that the Estonian experience in building up democratic institutions, implementing economic reforms and involving civil society in public life and decision-making can really help other countries where such processes are still in their initial stage.

Despite the work that has already been done to achieve the very challenging Millennium Development Goals, we must admit, unfortunately, that the gap between the rich and the poor is widening. What is more, it is taking new forms in our changing world. In addition to economic inequality, the information era has brought about the so-called digital divide, a divide between information-rich and information-poor States and nations as well as social groups. I would like to briefly elaborate on this topic.

In spite of the rapid development in information technology over the last ten years, only a small group of privileged countries and social groups have benefited from the so-called digital revolution. For example, let us consider access to the Internet. Many of us cannot really imagine life without the Internet, but four-fifths of the world population have never had any contact with the Internet. More than a half of Internet users live in Europe or in North America, which together represent only 17 per cent of the world's population. In Africa, only 1.4 per cent of the population uses the Internet.

The digital divide exists not only between countries but also within countries, between different social groups. The causes of such a divide can be age, gender, language, education or income. The digital divide is a reflection of technological, social and economic backwardness, perhaps due to a lack of infrastructure or to that infrastructure being very expensive. At the same time, the digital divide is not only an expression of existing socio-economic inequality, but also amplifies it and even causes it. Today, the social and economic value of access to information is much higher than it was 20 years ago. Unequal access to know-how, information networks and opportunities to contribute to these networks, will, in the longer term, lead to a further marginalization of poor countries and poor social groups. Paradoxically, the very same Internet is behind this marginalization, although it is supposed to be the cheapest and most efficient way to exchange information and knowledge in the world.

Since information technology has a strong impact on economic growth and competitiveness, there is no doubt that it is a new factor in development policy. That is why in recent years, more and more attention has focused on the causes and consequences of the digital divide. For example, the United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Report 2001 concentrated on those problems and was the centre of attention at the 2003 World Summit on the Information Society in Geneva.

I am very pleased that Estonia has, in a relatively short period of time, achieved a remarkable level in several areas of information technology. We have managed to create a favourable environment for development in this field and have ensured that the necessary infrastructure has been created through close cooperation between the public sector and the private sector, businesses and non-governmental organizations. As a result of this, Estonian citizens of limited means now have access to several information society services. According to "The Economist", as of 2004, Estonia ranks 26th in the world in e-readiness and holds a leading position among Central and Eastern European countries. More than half the Estonian population regularly uses the Internet; 38 per cent own computers; 80 per cent own mobile phones; 62 per cent use Internet banking; and 59 per cent fill out their tax returns electronically. Estonians can communicate with both the central Government and local governments over the Internet and are able to use legally binding digital signatures. All those indicators are in line with European Union averages even though Estonia's gross domestic product remains considerably lower than the European average.

I believe that, as a former country in transition, Estonia has experiences which could be very useful for developing countries with respect to the promotion of information and communication technologies. Estonia is in a position to provide development assistance, first

and foremost in the form of know-how. We have already taken steps in that direction: in the summer of 2002 the Government of Estonia, the United Nations Development Programme and the Information Programme of the Open Society Institute jointly set up the Estonian e-Governance Academy. The purpose of that unique Academy is to improve the public-private cooperation in the information and communication technologies. The initial beneficiaries of the project are Central and Eastern European countries, countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States and Asian countries, but we already have future plans for African countries as well. The e-Governance Academy has already held training courses for officials from Kyrgyzstan, Sri Lanka, Albania, Kazakhstan and other countries.

The year 2004 is the final year of the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People. I am an Estonian, and as an Estonian I have a specific reason to talk about indigenous peoples: we are a nation that knows how important it is to preserve and develop our culture and language. Therefore, I am very happy that recent decades have seen increased momentum in the activities of the United Nations and its agencies to protect the rights of indigenous peoples.

But the approaching end of the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People must not mean diminished attention to the situation of indigenous peoples. The rights of indigenous peoples must be codified in international law without further delay. Estonia firmly supports the speedy formulation and adoption of a declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. Regardless of the progress that has been made locally, many of the world's peoples remain uncertain about the preservation of their cultures and languages. Restrictions on the rights of indigenous peoples are one of the reasons behind the emergence of hot spots and crises.

Mr. Dauth (Australia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Scientists enter endangered species into a Red Book in order to help save them from extinction. But we do not yet have a Red Book of peoples. When a species of wildlife disappears, nature becomes poorer and the ecological balance can be damaged. By the same token, the extinction of a people means that the whole world becomes intellectually and culturally poorer.

Anthropologists have used the concept of the "fourth world" to refer to the ever increasing marginalization of indigenous peoples and the deterioration of their living conditions. The living conditions of Finno-Ugric peoples in their historic homelands provide a worrying example. The Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly has expressed its concerns in that respect. In August this year, the fourth World Congress of the Finno-Ugric Peoples took place in Estonia under the motto "Youth is our future." The final document of the Congress expressed concern about the ongoing loss of national identity by Finno-Ugric peoples and called on the international community to devote greater attention to the protection of human rights and the rights of indigenous peoples and national minorities.

I would like finally to touch upon the future of the United Nations. The United Nations needs to be strengthened and improved: it needs to be reorganized so that it can better respond to new challenges. Reorganization and increased efficiency would make the Organization more reliable and provide it with greater authority. Here, all Member States share a common goal: to ensure the steady development of the United Nations and to effect reforms that would enhance its effectiveness as a multilateral organization. Estonia firmly supports that process.

I believe that greater attention should be devoted to the prevention of crises and conflicts. We await the publication on 1 December of the report of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, which could provide essential guidelines for making the United Nations function more efficiently in the changed global framework.

Thanks to the efforts of Secretary-General Kofi Annan and the President of the fifty-eighth session, Julian Hunte, and thanks to the cooperation of Member States, discussions on revitalization of the work of the General Assembly have yielded concrete and desirable results, reflected in resolution 58/316, adopted on 1 July. That resolution is an essential landmark in the process of changing and modernizing the General Assembly to keep pace with developments in world events. At the fifty-ninth session, under the presidency of Mr. Jean Ping, we must continue and intensify our efforts in that direction.

Finally, it is also high time that we moved forward with reform of the Security Council, which

would enable the United Nations to participate more effectively in resolving world problems and crises.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Estonia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Arnold Rüütel, President of the Republic of Estonia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Martín Torrijos, President of the Republic of Panama

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Panama.

Mr. Martín Torrijos, President of the Republic of Panama, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Martín Torrijos, President of the Republic of Panama, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Torrijos (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to begin by warmly congratulating Mr. Jean Ping, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Gabon, on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. I wish also to extend my country's thanks to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for the powerful and inspiring words he spoke yesterday (see A/59/PV.3).

Thousands of my compatriots are today suffering under the blows of nature. Floods of a kind never before seen have brought grief to many families. The entire country has turned to the victims in a truly moving display of solidarity. With my heart in Panama with the victims and their families, I have come to the United Nations, because the tragedy unfolding in my country highlights more than ever the need to tackle the problem of poverty urgently.

The United Nations was conceived as a way of preventing war and restoring peace. Today, all the countries of the world have to be able to feel that they can come to the United Nations to solve their problems and not just to discuss them. If that is to happen, the United Nations must reform.

For some years, from this rostrum, heads of State and Government have been urging the need for reform, and the Secretary-General has welcomed that initiative. I want to join my voice to theirs so that once and for all we actually carry out the reform. We cannot afford to wait any longer or the people of the world will lose faith in the United Nations.

We do not need an organization with a glorious past. We need an organization with a future, one that can tackle the world's most serious problems. For that reason it is necessary that the principal organs be more representative.

There are political struggles and armed conflicts on every continent. There is no region of the world where peace and harmony reign. Some are regional conflicts, some are internal ones, but they are no less bloody for that. And yet, there is one struggle that is global in dimension and that requires global solutions. I am speaking of the struggle against hunger and poverty. That was the subject of a 20 September meeting of more than 60 world leaders, who were resolved to tackle it with all the tools available to them. I need not dwell on the tragic numbers, but I do endorse what has been said by the moving force of that meeting, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, President of Brazil: "peace can never grow out of poverty and hunger".

In Latin America the threat to democracy posed by military coups has been significantly reduced. It is no longer army divisions that threaten democracy; it is the legions of the poor and the unprotected who can destroy democratic institutions if their basic needs are not met.

But then we face a contradiction: the more poverty there is in a given country, the less likelihood there is of being able to defeat it. Countries are crushed by public debt. Millions of people are being born today already owing more than they will earn in their entire lifetime. Often those debts are the result of past deficits, which, owing to excessive bureaucracy, bad projects or corruption, produced no tangible benefits for the people. The fiscal problems facing most of the countries in our region make the situation even worse, as Governments lack the resources they need to try to meet the minimum needs of their people.

This analysis is not a new one. The "lost decade" of the 1980s was the result of exactly the same problems, although there was also an international economic crisis and an absence of democratic

legitimacy in most of the continent at that time. There are, however, undeniable differences between that period and the present. On the one hand, over the past few years unprecedented wealth has been generated, while at the same time the number of poor has grown. On the other hand, although more countries are democratic today, there is also a greater amount of debate on how to effectively address society's immediate problems.

Democracy, as a system of government, ended up being conflated with the limitations of individuals, while in truth the problem was that Governments were unable to produce effective responses. The problem is thus not democracy; the problem lies with Governments.

Direct help to Governments, in the form of loans or grants, has not been enough or sufficiently effective to solve the problems of poverty or the lack of growth that the aid was supposed to correct. Those of us who have the responsibility of governing and trying to provide answers cannot forget that, for many, patience has yielded to despair. The immediacy of their needs demands immediate solutions, which are not always to hand. That means that we have to speak out clearly about the problems, that we have to administer our States with transparency and that we have to fight corruption in order to win back the trust of people who are tired of so much deception and frustration.

Latin America needs a new economic agenda, one not based at just throwing money at social problems. It needs an agenda that seeks to understand the complex nature of our countries and institutions. Stopping payments, restructuring, adjustments — that is a road that we have been down before, and our region was the loser.

The new agenda requires absolute transparency in public administration and accountability. But the task of making public administration more efficient and more transparent takes time and resources. But interest on debt builds up, and the needs of a large sector of the population also increase.

Progress in reducing poverty among our peoples will require much effort and great resources from the poor countries; to a degree, creditor countries and multilateral agencies could compensate them by reducing public debt. In that regard, we propose that a relief clause be included in the lending programmes of the international financial institutions to reduce future interest on our public debt if we meet agreed goals on poverty reduction. That would be one way of compensating Governments for their efforts to alleviate poverty while also allowing them to meet their financial obligations.

In the past few years, people's concerns have shifted dramatically. Cultural heritage, natural wealth, biodiversity and animal species threatened with extinction must all be protected. It seems that sometimes financial resources are found more easily for those issues than for the millions of human beings who are dying every day of hunger, or for those who are barely surviving, unable to live a decent life, and without hope.

I would like to join in the widespread call on the international community to devise and implement bold and generous approaches to tackle poverty. It is shameful that in the technological age, when so many things have been invented that were unimaginable just 10 years ago, that we have not been able to invent a way for millions of people in the world to escape from the subhuman conditions to which poverty condemns them.

Sometimes it seems that international aid is provided only if there are desperate tragedies or acts of terrorism. Of course, when nations are victims of national disaster or terrorism such international assistance is necessary and commendable. I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate Panama's resolve to combat terrorism wherever it may occur. But we must not forget that many more people die because of poverty than in wars or natural disasters.

I am pleased to report that Panama has done its duty and has stood by the international community in its efficient and safe management of the Canal. We shall continue in future to manage that important artery of international trade in the same way, so that it will be, as it has been today, open to shipping from all countries of the world.

I will return to my country optimistic, because I have seen here a determination to fight poverty. I have sensed the solidarity of the international community in the face of natural disaster and I have renewed my belief that when there is the will, when there is faith and determination, the most difficult tasks can be accomplished.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Panama for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Martin Torrijos, President of the Republic of Panama, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Joseph Kabila, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Joseph Kabila, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Joseph Kabila, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Kabila (*spoke in French*): At this time, when I have the honour to take the floor before this august Assembly, above all I would like to express to you, on behalf of the Congolese people as well as on my own behalf, my warm congratulations to Mr. Jean Ping on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly as well as the election of the members of his Bureau.

I also take this occasion to congratulate and give my continued support to Mr. Julian Hunte, the President of the previous General Assembly, for the significant quality of the work he accomplished during a difficult international situation.

This debate provides me the opportunity to bring the message of my country to the world — a message of peace and national reconciliation — and to express our vision concerning the violent events taking place in the world and the most appropriate way to find lasting solutions to those events.

In that respect, looking back at world developments, we can only note and deplore the rise in international terrorism in all its forms with its long line of victims, distress and desolation. This appears to me to be the appropriate time to announce that my country's commitment to the ratification of all international legal instruments on terrorism is moving into its final phase of adoption. Our aim is to combat that scourge which — I repeat — spares no one.

Apart from terrorism, the international community is confronted with the resurgence of other disasters which are just as murderous and devastating and which require us to strengthen our collective efforts. In particular I am thinking of HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and other endemic diseases.

That list of forgotten diseases should not obscure the immense poverty and the natural disasters that we see throughout the world. Moreover, we must not forget the areas of tension, civil wars and other armed conflicts which increase the misery and hopelessness of humanity and which thus sorely test international peace and security.

During the intersessional period, the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has been characterized by a process of political transition. In the long term, we plan to organize elections which will enable the Congolese people to freely choose their leaders. In that respect, I would like to point out that that process reached its midway point on 30 June 2004. It has thus entered a decisive phase which requires from all institutions of the transition a redoubling of effort in order to meet the electoral deadlines as laid out in the global agreement.

Today we can congratulate ourselves on the following significant progress: the reunification of national territory through the setting up of a land commission under central authority; national reconciliation, symbolized by the presence in the Government of former enemies; and the beginning of the process of integration of the army and the establishment of the national police force.

Nevertheless, much remains to be done, including the complete restoration of the authority of the State throughout the country and the establishment of the necessary internal and external conditions for the holding of the aforementioned elections.

Thus, taking into account the desire for peace of all of the Congolese people, and the determination expressed many times by the transitional Government to respect the deadlines, it is important that we reinforce, in terms of quality and quantity, the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), whose support of the forces of order will help us put an end to the

activism of the militias which continue to sow death and desolation in the eastern part of the country. In addition, given the results obtained by the political players in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the fulfilment of their obligations under the global agreement, we launch an urgent appeal to the international community and ask it to respect its promises and commitments in bringing about the objectives of the transition.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is a peace-loving country, resolutely committed to developing, maintaining and promoting excellent relations with all countries dedicated to peace and justice and particularly, with its neighbours.

Also the principle of good neighbourliness, far from being a simple slogan, is for us a living and daily reality. That is why I am happy to see the signature of the terms of reference, establishing a joint verification mechanism on the eastern border of our national territory. This will enable us to rebuild trust in relations in the region, a process which will culminate in the international conference on peace, security and development, scheduled to take place shortly.

The other major task in the Great Lakes region remains preventing a recurrence of unfortunate events, such as the massacres of the people in Bukuvu, Ituri and those recently committed in Gatumba, Burundi, during which 160 of our fellow citizens tragically lost their lives. This assassination of Congolese refugees on Burundian soil is the work of the enemies of peace and of peaceful cohabitation in our subregion. The people of Congo are waiting impatiently for the report of the inquiry being prepared under United Nations auspices on this very subject.

I solemnly express the Congolese people's faith in the United Nations, which has stood at our side at the cost of many sacrifices. We firmly believe in its ability to take even more responsibility on its shoulders, with a view to the ideas and principles contained in the Charter, particularly with regard to its process of revitalization and the adaptation of its structures so that it is able to rethink its working methods in order that we will see peace, security and peaceful cohabitation come about among peoples throughout the world.

I would like to conclude my statement by assuring the Assembly of our will to bring to a successful conclusion, with the help of the whole of the international community, the process of transition within the set deadlines so that the sons and daughters of the Democratic Republic of the Congo are able to live again in peace and dignity so long denied them and to which they legitimately have the right.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Joseph Kabila, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Valdas Adamkus, President of the Republic of Lithuania

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Lithuania.

Mr. Valdas Adamkus, President of the Republic of Lithuania, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Valdas Adamkus, President of the Republic of Lithuania, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Adamkus: Allow me to express my sincere thanks to the President of the General Assembly at its previous session, Julian Hunte, whose able and skilful leadership we enjoyed during the past session. I also wish the President at the fifty-ninth session, Jean Ping, a year of highly constructive and successful work.

It is our common duty to make this fifty-ninth session a success and a fitting preparation for the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations and the first high-level review of the implementation of the Millennium Declaration, to be held next year. I believe these two occasions will offer an excellent framework for a serious review of how the changing global situation can be met by a renewed United Nations.

The risks and challenges of the new millennium affect us all and can be tackled only by common efforts. Threats such as terrorism recognize no borders, no differentiation by race, religion, or ethnicity. The horror, devastation and fear that terrorism brings are

the same whether in Casablanca, Madrid, New York, Jerusalem or Beslan. Terrorism cannot be justified. And there can be no excuses and no leniency in confronting it. The fight against terrorism must remain one of the priority tasks of individual Member States and of the United Nations.

Even as we speak, humanitarian crises, poverty, famine and disease continue to plague large parts of the world. Across the globe, almost a billion people survive on less than a dollar a day. In sub-Saharan Africa alone, around 300 million people live in abject poverty.

In Iraq, the hope for universal and free elections is marred by almost daily explosions, and security remains too precarious for the United Nations to resume its pivotal role. The Middle East conflict continues taking its desperate death toll. And the word genocide is once again on our lips owing to the Darfur crisis in Sudan.

Therefore, we need to go the extra mile, to make extra efforts to empower the United Nations to deal successfully with these and other threats and challenges, because the United Nations, despite all the criticism, remains the only Organization capable of embodying the principles of a truly global and effective multilateralism. The United Nations can offer the global reach and legitimacy necessary to enable the international community to act.

As the nature of threats before us is changing and new responses are needed, it is high time to agree on future policies and principles. Today we need to build a shared understanding of the nature of modern threats to international peace and security. Much depends on the ability of the United Nations — that is, on us — to reach a new consensus on collective security. Our strength lies in our resolve to deal collectively with major challenges to peace, security and sustainable development.

Today, more than ever before, the United Nations has to play the leading role in building societies that follow the path of good governance, respect human rights and the rule of law. We must be able to intervene and to prevent situations of massive human rights violations.

We must also be firm in our struggle against all attempts to encroach upon human dignity, against all forms and manifestations of intolerance, anti-Semitism, racism or Islamophobia. The international community is vulnerable to the dangers posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, international organized crime, environmental degradation and the spread of highly dangerous diseases, such as HIV/AIDS. Our common efforts against these and other threats must be universal, consistent, systematic and unwavering.

No less universal and consistent must be our efforts to reduce poverty and hunger, to diminish disparities between and within nations, to improve living conditions for women and children and to offer a hope of a dignified life to ever-larger segments of the world's population, as pledged in the Millennium Declaration.

We need to press ahead with the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. We need to reinforce our political will to make our global partnership more effective, by fully honouring the commitments undertaken by the Monterrey Consensus.

Without peace there is no development. Without development there is no peace. This recognized linkage of security and development should be better reflected in our global agenda. Only by confronting these issues in a coherent and coordinated manner shall we be able to build our common future.

Lithuania is ready to contribute bilaterally and multilaterally to the implementation of the Millennium Goals, and by sharing our experience of a national reform process. Our membership in the enlarged European Union and the North Atlantic Alliance enables us to play a more active role by embracing the principles of development policy and by adopting the role of a donor.

Next year we will discuss how to find consensus on the institutional and political framework for the United Nations to operate in the future. Lithuania fully embraces the need for reform of the United Nations for the sake of enhancing its effectiveness and inclusiveness. We hope that the outcome of the deliberations of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change will be able to contribute significantly to giving a renewed impetus to the reform of the United Nations. If so, the next test will be to find broad agreement on changes and follow their implementation.

I hope, too, that next year will be crucial in moving ahead with the long-debated reform of the Security Council. The issue is not whether the Security Council should be enlarged. It is how to make it effective and representative. Therefore, Lithuania fully embraces the idea of ensuring broader representation and responsibility for the Security Council.

In addition, the Economic and Social Council must be renewed and strengthened. By dedicating ourselves to Economic and Social Council reform we have a real chance to make it an effective tool in the hands of active and responsible United Nations members.

It is my hope and wish that by the end of this session we shall arrive at marking the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations with the conviction and satisfaction that we have done everything in our power to build a better Organization, one capable of responding to both old and new, hard and soft, threats and challenges in an effective and comprehensive way.

Fully aware that the United Nations was created to serve humankind, let us embrace this challenge. Let us bring to fruition the promise that the United Nations is capable of fulfilling the hopes and aspirations of the peoples for whom it was created.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Lithuania for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Valdas Adamkus, President of the Republic of Lithuania, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 (continued)

General debate

Address by Mr. Pedro Miguel de Santana Lopes, Prime Minister of the Portuguese Republic

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Portuguese Republic.

Mr. Pedro Miguel de Santana Lopes, Prime Minister of the Portuguese Republic, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Pedro Miguel de Santana Lopes, Prime Minister of the Portuguese Republic, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Lopes (Portugal) *(spoke in Portuguese; English text provided by the delegation)*: At the outset, I would like to state that Portugal, of course, endorses the statement made here by the presidency of the European Union. Portugal wishes the United Nations to fulfil the central role it rightly deserves in the community of nations. The United Nations is an indispensable international Organization. Without this body, of which we are all a part, the world would be more unstable, less predictable and a place where the universal dream of peace and freedom would be no more than a mirage on a far-off horizon.

The United Nations was established in a distant historical context, but its ideas and basic values remain contemporary. Portugal has a habit of recalling them, on occasions such as this, because we feel that this common undertaking is based on solid foundations. "We the peoples of the United Nations" believe in the dignity and the value of the human being, in fundamental freedoms and in equality between men and women. We defend the primacy of international law and tolerance in relations between peoples.

But we also believe that one should not distinguish between large and small nations, as we all have a common interest in social advancement and in the maintenance of international peace and security. These are the objectives of this Organization that need to be preserved and strengthened. This is, in good truth, our common cause, the cause of humankind.

The month of September, in this city of New York, inevitably brings back memories of the horror of three years ago. It forces us to look at the challenges to peace that this Organization and all of us face today. The tragic events in Madrid, Beslan, Baghdad, Jakarta and other places show us that terrorism has entered the deepest and darkest of shadows.

No cause, no idea, justifies acts of pure barbarism and the spilling of innocent blood. Terrorism is an enemy of humankind. Moreover, Portugal believes that it is up to the United Nations to contribute decisively to the establishment of a global strategy against terrorism — a strategy that takes into account not only the obvious security-related responses, but also other elements that may have the potential to generate violence.

Let us be unyielding in the fight against terrorism, but let us also engage ourselves in doing it collectively. Let us take into account the laws and the values in whose name we are fighting, and should be fighting, this evil.

Hunger and poverty generate despair and may cause people to choose the path of violence. I would therefore like to express my appreciation for the Summit of World Leaders for Action against Hunger and Poverty, promoted by President Lula da Silva, which I had the honour to attend. We believe that that meeting was a fundamental step towards alleviating cases of extreme poverty, which are unsustainable in moral and political terms.

If we act now, the world can change for the better; if we do not, its balance could become increasingly difficult to manage. Portugal wants to be at the forefront of the future. That is why we believe that the sustainability of development and the defence of natural resources are paradigms of a new era. We believe that the economic development of the twenty-first century will be sustainable only if it truly respects the balance of the planet and if the Kyoto provisions are truly implemented.

Does it make sense that an Organization like the United Nations continues to work in the twenty-first century as it did 60 years ago? The United Nations was born at a time when there were no televisions, no computers, no cellular phones. Communications, technologies and means of transportation have all changed; DNA and the human genome have now been discovered; we surf the Internet on a global scale. And yet the Organization that brings together the peoples of the world has the same structure that it had more than half a century ago.

The pace of change is breathtaking. The United Nations finds itself at a crossroads: while its relevance is not challenged, we may question its effectiveness. But that is an issue that should be placed primarily before Member States. After all, the United Nations is an expression of our collective will. The Organization cannot be seen as a distant reflection on which we project our individual expectations, which often exceed the limits of the mandates and the means that we make available to it.

In that regard, we support the work of the High-Level Panel established last year by the Secretary-General to examine current challenges to peace and security. The strategies for strengthening the Organization to be recommended by the Panel aim at preserving what is best in the United Nations and at ensuring that it is equipped with the means necessary to promote real development, prevent conflicts and protect human rights.

Portugal unequivocally supports reform of the Security Council. We support its enlargement so that it will better reflect the world of today, through a rebalancing of its representativity. We have already stated before this forum — and we reaffirm today — our support for an increase in the number of permanent and non-permanent members. Portugal's support for Brazil, Germany and Japan has been known to the General Assembly since 1993. We have already expressed our support for India's application for candidacy, and, on behalf of the Government of Portugal, I take the opportunity to express our commitment to seeing the African continent represented by a permanent seat on the Security Council.

But we also want to improve the relationship between the Council and other organs and agencies of the United Nations, as well as promoting greater transparency in its decisions. The democracy that the Organization defends is not compatible with obsolete working methods that often have a negative impact on the image and the credibility of the United Nations and lead to its paralysis.

Preventing conflicts is more important than solving them. We should be aware that the usefulness of the United Nations will ultimately be judged by its capacity for conflict prevention. The proliferation of crisis situations has led to the current deployment of approximately 60,000 Blue Helmets in peacekeeping operations, and that number continues to increase.

Portugal has been with the United Nations in many of its peacekeeping operations around the world. Here, I would like to pay tribute to my compatriots and to all others who have served on peacekeeping missions, particularly those who have given their lives for our common ideals.

It is our hope that the Organization can better develop its work in the field of conflict prevention. However, we still lack an efficient instrument for the development of that policy. Therefore, at the last session of the General Assembly, Portugal proposed the creation of a commission to promote peace and

development, under the authority of and in collaboration with the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. Its objectives would be to regularly monitor countries in crisis or at risk and to ensure the cooperation6 of regional and international institutions.

We believe that our proposal remains relevant, and we thank all those who have already improved it through suggestions and comments. This is an idea on which we have worked in particular with our partners in the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries, which I would like to warmly acknowledge on this occasion.

Indeed, the Portuguese language is the unifying factor among hundreds of millions of people on five continents. So that it can have strength as a vehicle of communication and culture in the twenty-first century, the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries needs its members to make a clear commitment to the connection between the past, the present and the future. The fact that Portugal is the cradle of the Portuguese language does not lead us to claim it for ourselves alone with any special rights. The communities that one joins as a result of specific interests, however legitimate, can never erase one's own community — one's family, spirit, language, culture and identity. "Know thyself" was already inscribed at the foot of the Temple of Delphi.

Nowhere are we confronted with such a huge predicament regarding the ability of the United Nations to act as in Iraq. Iraq needs the support of the international community. The Iraqi people, ravaged by decades of dictatorship and war, deserve such support. And we should give the United Nations the necessary means to fulfil in its entirety the mandate provided by the Security Council. But we must also understand clearly that the international presence in Iraq — approved by the Security Council and by the Iraqi Interim Government — is by its own nature provisional.

It is time for the international community to unite in its efforts to ensure that the Iraqi people again find the path towards peace and development. We cannot change the past, but we must assume that the future can still be influenced in a positive way. Thus, we must quickly restore unity if our Organization is not to suffer permanent collateral damage as a result of the Iraqi crisis.

For democracy to succeed in Iraq, and for that country to maintain its unity, it is essential that its people have a say, through elections, regarding the way they wish to be governed. It is also important that the agreed political timetable be honoured, or we may seriously compromise the rightful expectations of the Iraqi people and Government. We cannot allow those who generate instability through unthinkable acts of terrorism to have the power to veto the establishment of a democratic regime in Iraq. Elections are the only way to enable the Iraqi people to meet the destiny of democracy and freedom to which they are entitled.

Peace, freedom and democracy are also at stake in other parts of the world we inhabit. We cannot look away from the tragedy unfolding in Darfur. Our collective security also requires the effective international control of the production of nuclear, chemical and bacteriological weapons and the means to deploy them.

For the maintenance of international security, it is also essential that the Organization continues to push for the resumption of the Middle East peace process. The existing status quo is unacceptable. Israel and Palestine need to learn to coexist in peace and security, within internationally recognized borders and without artificial partitions.

We cannot replace the dichotomy between liberalism and collectivism with another between liberty and peace on the one hand and terror and dictatorship on the other. The world has already entered a new era. The peoples of the whole world, as referred to in the Charter of the United Nations, demand a new contract between the governed and those who govern.

The three classic powers of Montesquieu are no longer the only ones in the government of the peoples. Those who believe so are lost in time. There is nothing worse than erring in our perception of reality. There are powers that are not as they were and others that Montesquieu, Locke and the drafters of liberal revolutions could not know of, because they did not exist or because, over time, they have changed configuration. One need only think of the power of the media over people's lives today.

Our peoples want to feel strength in the present and faith in the future. For that reason, I shall end my address the way I began: stressing the indispensability and the centrality of the United Nations in the daily

lives of free and sovereign nations. We belong to an Organization that has restored hope to many peoples and human beings by bringing the light of freedom to those who lived in oppression. Timor-Leste is an excellent example of the ability of the United Nations to do good.

But one should also stress the attention the United Nations has given to the vulnerable, children and the disabled and to the promotion of gender equality. For this Organization, humankind is not an abstract entity. The dialogue between cultures, civilizations and religions, which Portugal upholds, is an integral part of the daily work of the United Nations.

We are part of an Organization dedicated to making peace and preventing war. We are party to a collective project in the service of human rights and fundamental freedoms. We have the strength of our convictions. And, as Pope John Paul II has stated, we know that peace is not weakness, but strength.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Portuguese Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Pedro Miguel de Santana Lopes, Prime Minister of the Portuguese Republic, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Marc Forné Molné, Prime Minister of the Principality of Andorra

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Principality of Andorra.

Mr. Marc Forné Molné, Prime Minister of the Principality of Andorra, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Marc Forné Molné, Prime Minister of the Principality of Andorra, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Forné Molné (Andorra) (*spoke in Catalan; English text provided by the delegation*): A decade ago I was elected the Head of Government of my country. It was 1994, a time of hope for the world and for the Organization of the United Nations. The collapse of the communist system and the iron curtain and the appearance of new democracies in the world, combined with a positive economic outlook enabled us to imagine a better future for humankind in the twenty-first century.

Ten years later, we are living with considerable concern in a world that is becoming more and more violent, in which terrorist attacks are met with a military response and those military responses seem to generate new terrorist attacks. It would seem that we are caught up in a terrible settling of scores and in a spiral of hate, fanaticism and senseless bloodshed. Every day, the media shows images of innocent people and soldiers losing their lives in those conflicts. The stakes continue to rise, yet the cause of world peace seems increasingly vulnerable. The almost instantaneous arrival in every home of images of the most dramatic events taking place everywhere is even becoming banal.

The privilege of being able to come so many times to the Assembly on behalf of my country has produced in me states of mind that have gone from initial curiosity and the wish to know and learn to a much more sceptical phase, by way of periods in which large question marks were placed on the role we are all playing in this game.

We want to be positive and optimistic and not to betray the heritage of peace, harmony and open welcome that are the essence of the life of the Andorrans, both women and men. But it must be admitted that it is becoming more and more difficult to think in that way and to believe that the principles that inspired, for example, the founding of the United States of America, can still prevail.

That is because the notion of pre-emptive war has now shaken us all. The principle of attacking before one is attacked is no new invention. But it had seemed to be a tribal memory or a type of behaviour belonging to other, none too remote times in the history of Europe itself.

The big questions are: what justifies a pre-emptive attack? Which country or countries pose a sufficient threat to allow taking such a risk? Why attack one country and not another, perhaps equally dangerous one? Are the sufferings of some people more meaningful than the sufferings of others, and consequently more deserving of action? Should the conventions of international law be cast aside by

Members of the United Nations, as they are by lawless terrorists?

What I would like to do today is reflect on the things we can learn from the past that can guide us towards a more promising and safer future.

For countries with a deep respect and admiration for the history of freedom of the United States — and Andorra counts itself among those countries — it is a source of consternation to note that the doctrine of pre-emptive attack has generated a level of distrust among Governments and peoples. After the worldwide outpouring of sympathy following the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, that changed perception is profoundly troubling.

Neither can anyone claim that sympathy is enough. Worldwide sympathy was the reaction to the attacks on New York and Washington. We, the people of Andorra, were very directly affected by the attacks in Madrid six months ago. Very recently, Russia has been added to the list of disasters. But sympathy alone cannot break the cycle of fear and violence.

We need to address the causes of terrorism and comprehend the forces that give it power in order to respond together in compliance with the rule of law. Tomorrow, my country will deposit instruments of ratification for four conventions against terrorism, and the rest are scheduled to be ratified in the coming year.

Mr. Kazykhanov (Kazakhstan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We cannot allow terrorism to unbind the rule of law, since that would mean undoing the tissue of civilized behaviour, which serves as a safety net in modern culture. Instead of isolating one nation from another, instead of moralizing and self-serving political posturing, instead of giving in to fear, we must recognize that our common vulnerability goes hand in hand with a humanity that we also share.

Helping every member of the international community to realize that what happens to others can also happen to us creates a basis for tolerance and understanding. How much stronger we, all the countries represented at the United Nations, could become in the fight against terrorism if we truly acted together. A Security Council strengthened by a common will to root out terrorism could do much more than individual actions supported by a few Governments.

We must give back to the United Nations its sense of determination and help it to help us all in the crucially important fight against terrorism. I call in particular on the States that are permanent members of the Security Council to think long and hard about what they can achieve together, with the support of all other United Nations Member States, to preserve international order and models of civilized behaviour, which this Organization represents and which it has taken humankind so many millenniums of suffering and progress to achieve.

In this context, Andorra would support an increase — up to 24 — in the number of members of the Security Council so as to guarantee a more accurate representation of the reality of today's world in that important decision-making body.

I believe that the energy that feeds the cycle of violence is the result of the abstractions behind which we hide — abstractions of nation, religion or race. We hide our vulnerability behind a kind of rigid certainty or moral righteousness. Ignorance and the unwillingness to recognize differences give rise to xenophobia and racism.

There is not much use in wondering now if the results would have been different, and the dangers facing us today less severe, if different policies had been applied after the criminal and unforgivable attacks of 11 September 2001; if the peace process in Israel and Palestine had been more successful; or if we in the United Nations had been able to play a different role. Granted, our response, as the United Nations, to other international crises has been imperfect, and we are constantly striving to rectify the way in which we approach such issues. But the results have been invaluable. Our efforts averted worse bloodbaths, greater harm to the oppressed and ever more extreme trauma and despair.

What good is this Organization if we lack the wisdom and moral strength to attempt to reconcile our fellow nations? How could we continue to hope for peace and justice in the world if the United Nations ceased to press forward with its mission?

Andorra has never been a wealthy country, though its inhabitants have always been free. In this respect, we have a privileged history. Other nations have endured greater privations and fratricidal wars, have lost customs and traditions and have had its citizens flee into exile.

Conscious of the moral debt which we owe to others, three years ago we proposed to increase our development assistance to 0.7 per cent of our budget for next year. Although that represents a great effort for us, as a small country, I am happy to inform the Assembly that that commitment will be honoured. I am also sure that my successor as head of Government will continue to increase Andorra's contribution to the objectives of development until we reach 0.7 per cent of gross domestic product. We will also become a member of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and help to make its worthy mission a reality.

We live in a world of limited resources and opportunities. Competition for them is increasing with the growth of globalization. The worst outcome of the inevitable future competition would be increasingly violent demands on the part of one nation or another. Yet the essential issues facing us are not restricted to just one part of the world; nor can they be defined in terms of the advantages or interests of a single nation. Preserving the environment and maintaining a strong global economy, dignified standards of living and safe and peaceful political relationships all require a concerted effort.

The task will not be easy. It will require all the courage, energy, diplomatic talent and communication skills that we can bring to bear. Our joint task has never been as important as in the coming year.

Yesterday, I listened carefully to the words of the Secretary-General, who set a very high standard for all in his opening speech. I would like sincerely to congratulate the Secretary-General for the courage of his words. I have heard many impressive speeches in this Hall over the past 10 years. The Secretary-General's statement yesterday was the best, by far, of all of them.

Although Andorra joined the United Nations just 10 years ago, our country is not a new one. Quite the contrary — the Principality of Andorra is one of the oldest and most peaceful nations in the world. Our frontiers have not changed for centuries, and we have practised parliamentary democracy for over half of that time. In fact, we have had uninterrupted peace since 1278.

In the thirteenth century, during the violent period of the Cathar heresies, which created upheaval in our part of the world, two powerful lords — the Count of Foix in the north and the Bishop of Urgell in the south — managed to overcome religious and political differences to negotiate an agreement which made the Andorran State possible. Through the 1993 constitution, we keep their successors — the President of the French Republic and the Bishop of Urgell — as our heads of State in a personal, joint and indivisible manner. The continued existence of Andorra over the centuries has, indeed, been the result of a skilful and constant will to negotiate between our people and their powerful neighbours.

The democratic process which began with the setting up of the Council of the Land in 1419 was essential for our survival as a free community. Although conflicts have also threatened Andorra during its history, mutual understanding has protected us better than have the high peaks of the mountains which surround us or the rigorous winters which isolate us from the outside world for weeks and weeks at a time. When I read Andorran documents from past centuries, I recognize how deeply ideas of independence and respect for others have guaranteed our well-being and our security.

Given the bloody course of European history during previous millenniums, we hold this as a remarkable accomplishment. We have never had an army, nor have we produced one single offensive weapon of any type. Our only weapon has been the wisdom and prudence of our forebears, who had the good sense to keep out of all neighbouring conflicts. That good sense has been inherited by the new generations of young Andorrans — women and men who are very well prepared for the world of today, open to knowledge of new technology and full of legitimate pride in being members of a small State in which they have every chance of being the main agents of their future, but who are, at the same time, perplexed by the growth of new religious fanaticism and exclusiveness and by the return of old fanaticisms, which we had considered forgotten.

At this, the dawn of a new era, we must pass on to them the trust which we have placed in the United Nations and in the supremacy of law over force. This our fathers taught us, and this our children must learn if they are to be worthy members of humankind.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the

Principality of Andorra for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Marc Forné Molné, Prime Minister of the Principality of Andorra, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Ivo Sanader, Prime Minister of the Republic of Croatia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Croatia.

Mr. Ivo Sanader, Prime Minister of the Republic of Croatia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Ivo Sanader, Prime Minister of the Republic of Croatia, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Sanader (Croatia): This is my first address to this body in my capacity as the Prime Minister of Croatia. I feel privileged to be able to present the Assembly with the Croatian Government's strategic priorities in the domain of foreign policy.

I would like at the outset to congratulate Minister Jean Ping on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly and to wish him every success in performing his highly important task. He can rely fully on Croatia's support and cooperation.

For the first time, Croatia is addressing the General Assembly as a candidate country for membership in the European Union. Today, I would like to share with you Croatia's position with respect to the most important tasks facing the United Nations at this time of great multilateral challenges.

The very fact that so many heads of State and Government leaders have gathered here in New York to mark the beginning of the fifty-ninth General Assembly session serves as a telling affirmation that multilateralism is a driving force in global politics and confirms that we live in no ordinary times.

The world at the beginning of the twenty-first century is profoundly different from the one in which the Berlin wall started to crumble. Never before have we faced so many opportunities stemming from new technologies and enhanced regional and global cooperation. And seldom have we encountered as many threats and challenges as we do today.

Tragic events in recent years, from New York to Moscow, from the Middle East all the way to Southern Asia have confirmed that terrorism currently stands out as the most pressing threat to our world, taking, as it has, thousands of innocent lives at random. Equally dangerous is the threat of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). We must resort to all means necessary to prevent the proliferation of these vehicles of death. If the two evils of terrorism and WMDs are synergized, they could bring upon mankind an unforeseeable level of destruction.

Therefore, we must not relax our efforts in the fight against global terrorism nor neglect the deadly impact of WMDs. These issues must remain at the top of our priorities; any hesitation to address them in a timely and appropriate manner could have unforgiving consequences.

The United Nations should continue to play a decisive role in our quest for a stable, secure and prosperous world. Croatia welcomes the reports of the Secretary-General on the work of the United Nations (A/59/1) and the implementation of the Millennium Declaration (A/59/282). I would particularly like to commend his reform efforts to date. He has identified many challenges to the United Nations and we should not hesitate to meet them. We particularly share his assessment that the United Nations requires adequate security and institutional agility to adapt to changing circumstances in the world. The Security Council has a paramount responsibility in that regard, but we must not overlook the role of the General Assembly, whose potential is far from being explored to the fullest.

Regarding Security Council reform, Croatia supports the enlargement of the Council in all categories of membership, based on appropriate regional representation.

Let us make the United Nations even more relevant, with a range of inventive and collaborative approaches that will increase the effectiveness of our joint efforts and result in the Organization's increased capability to respond to the needs and realities of the new century.

The credibility of the United Nations does not depend solely on the political will of its Member States and its capacity to manage crises. It also depends on its

capacity to respond to the expectations of those who are in dire need of assistance, who cannot protect themselves from imbalances and injustice. We cannot shy away from seeking all available solutions to the fundamental global challenges we face today, including extreme poverty, drug smuggling, the spread of deadly diseases and global climate change. Globalization needs to be mastered; the opportunities it offers need to be assessed and its excesses rectified.

Finding appropriate answers to those fundamental questions requires multilateral cooperation, with a viable and effective United Nations at its core. We all wish to see a strong and decisive United Nations that is capable of effectively responding to current and future challenges, but this cannot happen by default. It depends solely on the contribution and dedication of each and every Member State.

Croatia gained extensive experience in post-conflict management after the war that was imposed upon it in the 1990s, especially in the fields of refugee return, confidence building, prosecuting war crimes, economic reconstruction and the reintegration of war-torn areas with the rest of the country. We stand ready to contribute our knowledge and share it with those who need it.

In confronting alarming challenges, such as security, poverty, terrorism, pandemics and environmental issues, collective action is most likely to yield the best results, since not even the most powerful among us can bear the burden alone.

At this very moment, Croatian peacekeepers are participating in seven United Nations peacekeeping missions. We are determined to further intensify our participation in United Nations peacekeeping missions with respect to the composition and number of troops deployed, as well as the theatres of operation.

We will continue to support the training of peacekeepers from newest troop-contributing countries — whether provided directly or under the auspices of the United Nations — by receiving foreign officers as attendees of the relevant training courses in the Republic of Croatia, as well as by sending Croatian instructors to organize and conduct courses in the newest troop-contributing countries.

Croatia has presented its candidacy for membership in the Security Council for the 2008-2009 term. Our membership would not only represent a great tribute to my country, but also a recognition of all the effort that has been fruitfully invested in the peace and stability of South-East Europe.

We are proud of our achievements since becoming a United Nations Member State in May 1992. From being part of a European powder keg, Croatia grew into one of the key generators and promoters of stability in South-East Europe and beyond. With a growing economy, a greatly expanded highway network and a blossoming tourism industry, Croatia is firmly oriented towards the future. And I can state with confidence that the best is yet to come.

Croatia has successfully embarked upon the road of Euro-Atlantic integration, with a clear goal of European Union and NATO membership. The bedrock of Croatia's foreign policy remains good bilateral relations with all our neighbours and beyond, cross-border and regional cooperation and constructive multilateralism.

My country is speedily preparing for the opening of accession negotiations with the European Union in early 2005. We are confident that Croatia will fully meet all the criteria required in this demanding process on time. We have already demonstrated our reform and decision-making abilities through the fulfilment of the Copenhagen criteria required for European Union candidate status. This has been far from easy, but in the end, Croatia's success demonstrates that hard work and reform-oriented policies are the best possible investment in a country's future.

Croatia is ready to serve as a model country in South-East Europe, encouraging and assisting our neighbours to realize their Euro-Atlantic ambitions. The prospect of EU membership has proved to be the best incentive for the countries of Central and south-east Europe to implement comprehensive political, economic, institutional and democratic reforms.

A unified Europe is no longer a dream; it is a reality upon which the prosperity and security of the entire continent is based. The European Union is economic prosperity and cooperation; it is stability and security; but, above all, it is its values that stand out so strongly. We all share the same values, the same principles and the same dedication.

A famous Croatian poet, Dobrisa Cesaric, wrote a poem about a waterfall whose beauty and might are

created by thousands of small drops of water. Croatia's drop is a part of this wonder, called "one Europe".

Croatia is determined to contribute to the best of its ability to the success of this Organization and to the principles on which it is based. Too often we fail to fathom the true meaning of a phrase that is much more than the mere name of our Organization: the United Nations.

The United Nations — there can be no better global formula in the face of the mounting challenges and the potential, burdens, hopes and expectations of the new century.

Mr. Ivo Sanader, Prime Minister of the Republic of Croatia, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Miguel Abia Biteo Boricó, Prime Minister of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea.

Mr. Miguel Abia Biteo Boricó, Prime Minister of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Miguel Abia Biteo Boricó, Prime Minister of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

President Abia Biteo Boricó (spoke in Spanish): Although protocol requires that our statements be brief, it is no matter of routine for Equatorial Guinea to congratulate Mr. Jean Ping, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Gabonese Republic, on his well-deserved election to guide the work of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth regular session.

We congratulate you, Mr. President, because, first, it is right that the voice of the oppressed and marginalized that you represent should be heard loud and clear by the international community. Secondly, we would like also to encourage you, because the task facing you personally and your country, the Gabonese Republic, is to coordinate — and to endeavour to reconcile — the varied and opposing interests that exist in this unipolar, artificial and fragile world, where few speak out, others say nothing or only listen, and yet others speak, but to no effect.

The task is difficult, because we need to rebuild the international authority that has been taken away from the United Nations. We can do this only if there is a spirit of honesty, individual and collective responsibility, and goodwill on the part of Member States, so that selfish interests can be put aside in the common fight to ensure the primacy of the principles and objectives of this world Organization, which are positive and universal.

Mr. President, you will always be able to count on the support and ongoing cooperation of my country, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, in ensuring that your work is fruitful and benefits humankind.

We express our eternal gratitude to Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of this Organization, who at all times has been equal to the circumstances and who has dealt with caution, impartiality and justice with the issues that have come to the attention of the Organization over the course of this year. We reiterate our confidence in him and assure him of our cooperation in the task of strengthening the role of the United Nations.

Equatorial Guinea is participating in the work of the General Assembly at this session with deep concern because of the dangers and threats posed by the methods used by more powerful countries in intervening in the affairs of less protected nations, such as my own. We believe that the United Nations has still not fulfilled its primary objective of guaranteeing international peace and security. We are living in times of serious upheaval in various parts of the world, brought about by the anarchy that currently characterizes international relations.

Equatorial Guinea will join its efforts with those of the international community in order to strengthen the international authority of the United Nations.

We have come to the United Nations to state publicly that Equatorial Guinea is under threat. We say this out loud, and we hope that we will truly be heard, because we know that complaints by weaker States have often fallen on deaf ears in this forum when the interests of the strongest are at stake.

Equatorial Guinea is facing a serious threat, and we ask the United Nations to take serious, committed measures, not only with regard to the issues affecting Equatorial Guinea today but also in order to prevent

other countries in the same situation as ours from being victimized by the same sort of conspiracy in future.

Indeed, my country is being threatened by the incessant and poisonous campaign of defamation against my Government that has been orchestrated by pressure groups and by the press of certain countries — saying that we in Equatorial Guinea do not respect human rights, calling my Government a dictatorship, as well as accusing us of squandering oil revenues. That campaign has as its only objective the justification of an absurd intervention by force in Equatorial Guinea — the failed multinational mercenary invasion that was to have taken place on 6 March last.

The international community is aware of the events connected to that aborted plan thanks to press reports on the trials, held simultaneously in Equatorial Guinea and in Zimbabwe, of those mercenaries who were arrested in Malabo and in Harare, respectively.

Indeed, and under the pretext of supporting the political claims of a supposed opposition leader in exile in Spain, a number of mercenaries, of various nationalities but with a common leadership, acquired a cargo plane with the goal of transporting to Malabo, in the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, 65 trained, armed men who were to take part in an invasion — a suicide operation. They planned to occupy previously identified strategic areas, in order physically to remove the President of the Republic, members of the Government and anyone who opposed them.

The invasion, planned for the night of 7 March 2004, would have represented the implementation of an elaborate plan, hatched, elaborated and perfected by another group of 18 men, who had obtained a license to fly cargo and passenger planes in Equatorial Guinea, using the facilities provided by the Government. That group was to join up with those coming from Harare.

The support that they received from Spain was to involve the use of two Spanish Navy warships with 500 sailors on board, for support in case of resistance. The goal was to put in power, at Government headquarters, Mr. Severo Moto Nsa, who had formed a government in exile that was recognized by the previous Government of Spain.

Fortunately, the solidarity of the Governments of Angola, Zimbabwe and South Africa came into play and they alerted the security services of my country, which acted immediately, arresting, on the night of 6 March, the 18 men stationed in Malabo, while the Harare Government did the same with those found in that capital's airport on 7 March 2004.

The mercenaries themselves, in public statements during the trials held in Malabo and in Harare, explained the plan's objectives and named the people involved. They also gave details on the financing of the purchase of arms and of the cargo plane, and on the offer of the Spanish ships, which were already, at that time, anchored in the territorial waters of Equatorial Guinea.

The Secretary-General, as well as the Members of this Organization, should know that, a month before those events, my Government had rejected and denounced the sending of those warships to Equatorial Guinea in a note to the Spanish Government, which at the time was using as a pretext its support for the Government of Equatorial Guinea in the conflict related to its claim of sovereignty over the island of Mbañie. This General Assembly can, I am sure, understand the danger and the loss of human life that this invasion would have caused if it had succeeded.

We know that Equatorial Guinea is a victim for the sole reason that it has respected the principles and exercised the fundamental rights of a sovereign State, which are the exercise of sovereignty by the people, non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries and the right to the exclusive use of the resources that nature has given it. If this is so, we would like the Assembly to reply to the following questions, if possible.

Why are so many negative things currently being said about Equatorial Guinea in foreign circles, when the country's people themselves live in peace and there are no demands being made by the populace or from the people's representative bodies?

Why this talk of dictatorship and oppression in Equatorial Guinea, when the administration in power has re-established political freedom in the country, with 13 political parties in a country of barely one million people?

Can a dictatorship based on oppression allow freedom such as the current level of foreign investment and the arrival of more than seventeen international flights per week to such a small country as Equatorial Guinea?

Is there an international police force that has the authority to tell Equatorial Guinea how to use its economic resources, when we already have an administrative and political organization for managing our resources with transparency? Can a country that does not use its resources for the benefit of the people approve an annual budget, through parliament, of 618 billion CFA francs as a justifiable public cost?

Is it true that the only way to end the abuse allegedly committed by Equatorial Guinea would be to organize the kind of terrorist and mercenary invasion targeted at eliminating innocent people that was planned on 6 March 2004?

Equatorial Guinea would like to know whether this mercenary system is supported by the international community. If it is supported, which countries are responsible for this crime? We do not believe that there is any difference between the terrorism that we condemn today and the terrorist acts committed by mercenaries in various parts of the world.

Equatorial Guinea is seriously under threat. We say this because we know from reliable sources that our enemies will not forgive the embarrassment and defeat caused by the failure of the mercenary invasion on 6 March. However, this does not mean that Equatorial Guinea is going to drop its arms or fall on its knees and let the enemy do with it what it will. We believe that the United Nations responsibility is to maintain peace and international security and to avoid a merciless war between countries.

We would like to affirm that there are countries who are Members of this global Organization, represented in this hemicycle, whose security agencies were informed of this devilish plan, and who, unlike Angola, South Africa and Zimbabwe, who expressed their solidarity, simply kept silent, waiting for events to unfold. But we ask you to leave us in peace, because Equatorial Guinea is a peaceful country and we do not think that we have offended anyone.

A detailed analysis of the situation has shown us that the end of the cold war has not actually led to the unification of humanity and the integration of the world as we had hoped. Rather, it has rekindled selfish and perverse feelings among those who have always dominated — or have always wanted to dominate — the world. The phenomenon of mercenaries, therefore, is a classic practice of States' piracy, politically dressed up and falsely justified by political, economic and humanitarian interests. This is why we continue to see this defamatory campaign, to justify a possible invasion.

Nevertheless, Equatorial Guinea does not need to please the international community with propaganda regarding our development. Our only judge and arbiter is our own people, to which our State institutions must justify their actions. This tactic of creating a falsified negative image of a State is of no surprise to anybody at the moment, and it should least of all be a surprise to this world Organization.

We also see that the theory of a globalized world is a fallacy, because, as we very often say, you cannot call a dog to you while holding a stick to beat it. We cannot accept globalization when the concept of colonialism, the superiority of some peoples over others or even of neo-colonialism still exists. Globalization is in contradiction with the concept of the superiority of some over others. Globalization does not mean exclusion as opposed to integration and cooperation. Finally, globalization does not mean power relations such as those that some would like to impose.

The situation in Equatorial Guinea affects other countries of Central Africa as well, as the terrorists themselves have declared. We know that the mercenaries have acted in other parts of the world, and we bring this to the General Assembly because of the destructive effects that have been seen in other affected countries. We feel that solidarity among African States and the third world in general is absolutely indispensable, because we are the direct victims of those who are ordering these mercenary acts.

In conclusion, we must stop looking backwards. The current breakdown of the forces of peace, independence and the sovereignty of States, as the antithesis to the major wars of the past century, shows us that we are close to unleashing a universal holocaust. The situation today is that the weakest and most needy are ignored and marginalized. We have to put a stop to this race to chaos and build a world that is more respectful of the human race.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Miguel Abia Biteo Boricó, Prime Minister of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: I now call on Mr. Rashid Abdullah Al-Noaimi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates.

Mr. Al-Noaimi (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, on behalf of the United Arab Emirates, it gives me great pleasure to begin my statement by congratulating you, Sir, and your friendly country, the Gabonese Republic, on your election as President of the fifty-ninth session of this Assembly. Given your political skills and experience, we are confident that you will competently and successfully lead our deliberations on pressing global and regional issues. We wish you every success in your endeavours.

On this occasion, I wish to pay tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Julian Robert Hunte, for his wise and skilful management of the activities of the previous session. It also gives me pleasure to reiterate our appreciation and gratitude to Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, for his consistent efforts to strengthen the leading role of the United Nations, especially in resolving the political conflicts and economic crises that continue to plague our world.

Notwithstanding the achievements of the last century and their positive impact on the principles of liberalization, globalization and freedom, recent events, especially during the last few years, have included, violations of human rights, the outbreak of terrorist attacks and the eruption of violence and conflicts. These events have, to a great extent, limited peoples' ability to reap the benefits of most of these achievements. Instead of directing efforts towards solving the problems related to poverty, the spread of epidemics, improving sustainable economic, environmental and social development mechanisms and strengthening international relations — as outlined in the Millennium Declaration — the world had to devote a great part of its efforts to further exploring coordinated measures for combating these grave threats, which have shaken the underpinnings of international peace and security.

Previous experience has shown that regional and international multilateral initiatives built on principles of partnership, justice, transparency and equality among peoples and States can address and contain global challenges. Therefore, we are convinced that carrying out the reform needed in the existing structures of international relations, especially in the United Nations system, has become an important priority so that its principal organs — the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council — can revitalize their activities and fulfil their responsibilities in terms of maintaining international peace and security.

Commitment by all countries and governments to discharge their responsibilities in accordance with the principles of international law is a key condition for enforcing the rule of law and avoiding potential economic, environmental and security problems. Therefore, the United Arab Emirates, as a Member of the United Nations, is committed to meet its obligations, especially those related to promoting friendly relations with neighbouring countries, cooperation in the security and economic fields and respect for the sovereignty, national unity and territorial integrity and the right to self-determination of all countries.

Proceeding from its belief in the value of dialogue, peaceful negotiations and legal arbitration in settling conflicts and disputes among countries, the United Arab Emirates has pursued a firm and peaceful policy regarding the question of the occupation by the Islamic Republic of Iran of our three islands: Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abou Moussa. The international community is now aware of the legal, historical and political grounds of this case, as well as all the initiatives, contacts and constant efforts by my country at various levels to find a peaceful solution to this question.

The United Arab Emirates is perplexed at the position of Iran and its constant rejection of all peaceful initiatives and endeavours by the member States of the Gulf Cooperation Council to find a peaceful solution to this important issue. Therefore, the United Arab Emirates calls upon the international community to urge Iran either to clarify its intentions towards the United Arab Emirates by entering unconditionally into serious bilateral negotiations which ensure restoration of the three occupied islands, their continental shelves and regional airspace and their economic zones to the full sovereignty and territorial unity of the United Arab Emirates, or to accept referral of this case to the International Court of Justice for arbitration.

The regrettable developments taking place on the security front in the Arabian Gulf region have created serious challenges to the international community due to the sensitive nature of this region and the emergence of new forms of threats, which include terrorist acts, kidnappings and arbitrary killing of hundreds of innocent people in various areas in Iraq and other countries. In this context, the United Arab Emirates expresses its strong condemnation of all acts of violence in Iraq, which if not contained will lead to an escalation of tension and instability in the entire region, as well as the world. We also express our support to the legitimate endeavours of the Iraqi people and their interim Government to complete arrangements for a peaceful transition of authority as soon as possible, to exercise their inalienable right to decide their political future and internal affairs, control their natural resources, rebuild their national institutions and maintain security on their borders.

We also attach great importance to supporting international and regional efforts to help the Iraqi people to rehabilitate their destroyed institutions, and to the unity and solidarity of the Iraqi people especially during this critical stage, in order to enable them to start a new phase in which security, stability, good-neighbourly relations and cooperation with all countries of the world prevail.

The United Arab Emirates reiterates its strong condemnation of all acts of terrorism in the Gulf region, especially in the fraternal Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and other areas where a number of residential areas were targets of horrific terrorist attacks. The United Arab Emirates declares its full support for the continuing efforts and measures taken by these countries to combat those inadmissible acts, including those by the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to defeat those criminal terrorist attempts inside Saudi territory.

The United Arab Emirates believes that settlement of the Middle East question cannot be achieved with the position of a de facto situation of occupation, settlement, and siege of the Palestinian people, who are now facing the worst humanitarian crisis in their history because of the acts of arbitrary killing, destruction, starvation and unjustified mass detentions by the Israeli authorities. The United Arab Emirates affirms that continuation of the Israeli aggression will inevitably lead to more violence and deterioration in the security situation.

We therefore recall the historical, political and legal responsibility of the United Nations and the Quartet, which is now responsible for finding a settlement of the Palestinian question through obliging Israel, the occupying Power, to unconditionally comply with the terms of the road map and other relevant international resolutions, especially those issued by the International Court of Justice and the General Assembly that call for dismantling the racist separation wall in the West Bank, as it is considered illegal and null and void.

We also affirm that establishment of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the region depends on the ability of the international community to end Israel's intransigence, on revitalization of the peace process and on full Israeli withdrawal from all Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, the Syrian Golan and the Shab'a farms. It depends also on the establishment of a Palestinian State with its capital at Al-Quds al-Sharif, pursuant to the relevant international resolutions and the fundamentals of the existing Arab peace initiative, which is based on the principle of land for peace. In that context, we also affirm the importance of respecting the wishes of the Lebanese people and of not interfering in its internal affairs.

Attaining and maintaining balance in the security situation in the Middle East and the Gulf region is today a matter of high priority. It requires a comprehensive, non-discriminatory, confidence-building policy that will lead to the elimination of all existing arsenals of weapons of mass destruction as part of an international process of non-proliferation. Here, we look forward to the outcome of the recent visit of the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to a number of countries in the region, which was aimed at convincing their Governments to relinquish the nuclear arsenals that pose a threat to neighbouring countries.

In that connection, we renew our appeal to the international community to take all necessary measures to compel the Israeli Government to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and to subject all its nuclear facilities to the IAEA international safeguards system, so that a zone free of weapons of mass destruction can be established in the Arabian Gulf and the Middle East regions.

Reports of the Secretary-General on the world economic and social situation reveal that almost a billion people lack food, drinking water, job opportunities, housing and educational, health and social services. The United Arab Emirates has a good record of providing development and relief assistance to many countries, and we believe that the international community should address those challenges as its common responsibility, requiring complete fulfilment of the commitments and pledges made by developed nations at United Nations conferences and summits on sustainable development and on financing for development. Those pledges relate to increasing assistance to developing countries, rescheduling foreign debt, easing restrictions on foreign trade, increasing foreign investment and providing access to modern technologies for peaceful purposes. That would enable developing countries to share equally in the benefits of globalization.

Further, we welcome current efforts to set up a global fund to end poverty by 2015. Here, we affirm that there must be progress in negotiations on North-South cooperation and on coordination among regional and international organizations if we are to put an end to the negative effects of repeated financial and economic crises and ensure steady assistance flows and the stability of commodity markets. Policies and choices to liberalize world trade and the world economy must be reviewed from a development perspective, taking into account the concerns and needs of small countries and developing countries, and their right to attain development and participate in the international decision-making process. This would enable their economies to avoid stagnation and marginalization, and would ensure the implementation of national programmes to diversify national production, develop human resources and reduce levels of unemployment, poverty and disease.

We hope that our deliberations at this session will have a positive outcome that will enhance our perception of our common causes and buttress our joint efforts to create a prosperous world based on the rule of law and justice, a world in which tolerance, well-being and progress prevail.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Rodolphe Adada, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Adada (Congo) (*spoke in French*): The election of Mr. Jean Ping to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session does honour to our continent, to our subregion of Central Africa and to his country, Gabon. I congratulate him sincerely on behalf of my delegation. We are familiar with Mr. Ping's high sense of duty, his selfless dedication to his work and his great skill, and we have no doubt that — like his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Julian Hunte of Saint Lucia — he will spare no effort to meet our expectations.

To the Secretary-General we say how much we appreciate his initiatives and his tireless efforts to make the Organization more effective.

At the Millennium Summit, Member States made solemn and very important commitments. Today, despite the fact that some progress has been made in implementing the Millennium Development Goals, the situation remains troubling. The assessment of the implementation of the Goals scheduled for 2005 is thus of particular importance. Here, we support all initiatives that would give fresh impetus to international cooperation to combat poverty and hunger. I am thinking in particular of the initiative of His Excellency President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva of the Federative Republic of Brazil, which rightly focuses on the Millennium Development Goals and on the Monterrey Consensus. The African Union's Extraordinary Summit on Employment and Poverty Alleviation in Africa, held on 8 and 9 September in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, was also intended to address those concerns.

In spite of all the problems that have hobbled the Doha round of multilateral trade negotiations, the resumption of negotiations this summer in Geneva gives us some reason to hope for the establishment of equitable rules of international trade. We continue to hope for greater equity and solidarity among poor and rich nations with a view to achieving globalization that is fair. We therefore support the recommendations of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization.

To meet the Millennium Development Goals, we also need peace and security — which, unfortunately, are lacking in a number of regions. The situation in the Middle East continues to concern us. Peace, that fundamental aspiration, remains beyond the grasp of

the peoples of the region; it is our joint responsibility to put in place the conditions for lasting peace.

In Africa, the attention of the international community remains focused on the too-great number of crises. To be sure, we can be pleased at recent developments in the situation in Côte d'Ivoire, following the Accra III summit, but we must continue to work to make the process irreversible.

In the Sudan, the Darfur crisis continues to be of great concern, in both its humanitarian and its political dimensions. A greater mobilization by the international community is required to support the efforts of the African Union. The objective is to avoid a disaster and to ensure peace for the people of the Sudan.

In our subregion of Central Africa, we were pleased with the positive outcome on 12 July 2004 of the national forum held in Sao Tome and Principe, scheduled under the Memorandum of Understanding, dated 23 July 2003, and concluded under the auspices of the Economic Community of Central African States, the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries, the African Union, the United States of America and Nigeria.

In the Central African Republic, where there is still a peacekeeping force of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community, supported logistically by France, our hope is to see the democratic process move forward and proceed to the general elections which are scheduled for 2005.

We welcome the efforts of the international community in Burundi — in particular, the South African mediation — for the results achieved to date. We call upon the political leaders of that country to remain focused on the national interests. Unity and development in Burundi depend on that.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, political life in the eastern part of the country in particular has recently been marked by a number of grave events such as the Ituri crisis, the Bukavu rebellion and the Gatumba massacres. We renew our support for the global and inclusive agreement, as well as for the institutions for transition.

We call on the international community to continue to pay all the attention required to that country, and we support all initiatives that would increase troop strength and the means of action of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is in that context that we are pleased with today's signature of the terms of reference of the joint oversight mechanism between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda.

That overview of the political situation in our subregion, which includes a number of countries in post-conflict situations, fully justifies the request of Central Africa to have a United Nations office. We are pleased with the existence of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Questions of Security in Central Africa and, in particular, the work given to that Committee. We wish to continue to have the input of the Committee in its relations with the competent bodies of the subregion, in light of what is at stake.

Similarly, we expect implementation of the conclusions of the multifaceted mission that was dispatched to Central Africa in June 2003 by the Secretary-General. We appreciate those conclusions as being very relevant, especially those establishing programmes for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration to help consolidate the peace processes taking place; helping to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS; stopping the circulation of small arms and light weapons; protecting the environment and creating conditions for development in Central Africa.

In order to meet all of the challenges and to establish all the conditions required for stability, we are placing our hopes on the international conference for peace, security, democracy and development in the Great Lakes region, preparations for which are already under way. That conference will undoubtedly be an excellent opportunity to search for lasting solutions to the recurrent crises that cause bloodshed in the region. I reiterate my country's willingness to make its contribution to that process.

As you know, the Republic of the Congo is among the countries in our subregion which is in a post-conflict situation. Under the leadership of President Denis Sassou-Nguesso, Congo is endeavouring at the same time, to consolidate peace and to re-establish a comprehensive macroeconomic equilibrium.

Among our current priorities, the question of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration continues to be very important. Our national programme concerning those issues will, for the 2004-2006 period, involve more than 40,000 ex-combatants.

The efforts of the Government, which are supported — and we appreciate that support — by the European Union, the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank, will be continued. We would also appreciate any other contribution that would help the Congolese Government resolve that thorny issue.

Additionally, Congo, in hoping to benefit from the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative, is very sensitive to the decisions taken in Paris on 9 and 14 September 2004, respectively, by the Paris Club and the donors. Here I reiterate the appreciation of my Government for those efforts. Congo's eligibility for that Initiative will undoubtedly allow us to allocate a majority of our resources for development and therefore to follow up with what was contained in our Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, which we expect will be validated by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

That would help us succeed in our efforts, within our national plan, concerning good governance and transparency in the management of our national affairs. Therefore, in following up on those various objectives, our country has joined the African Peer Review Mechanism under the New Partnership for Africa's Development and we have signed on to the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative.

Concerning the environment, we are involved in a partnership with the international community concerning the Congo Basin Initiative. Brazzaville will shortly host a summit that will consider plans to conserve the forests of this world heritage area. We therefore welcome the support given to that plan by France, the United Nations, the European Union, the United States, Germany, South Africa and a number of non-governmental organizations.

Congo reiterates its support for multilateralism. We remain convinced that the United Nations is the ideal framework for meeting the challenges that face the world. But the world has changed. New challenges are before us that require reforms that will allow the United Nations to adapt itself to current missions and the global configuration of the twenty-first century.

We therefore welcome the reform process undertaken by the Secretary-General and are truly hopeful regarding the recommendations of the high-level panel which was set up to examine the principle threats and challenges to collective peace and security and to make proposals with respect to reform of the international system.

Among the reforms expected, we firmly support the idea of enlarging the Security Council in its two components, namely, permanent and non-permanent members. We must take into account — among other things — the diversity of today's world in order to highlight the criteria of geographical representation and of responsibility in the management of worldwide affairs, without ever sacrificing effectiveness, cohesion, transparency or credibility.

As was stated by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, in his statement to the General Assembly at the 3rd meeting, on 21 September, "today, more than ever, the world needs an effective mechanism through which to seek common solutions to common problems." In order do this, we must not only act together in complying with the rules that we ourselves have implemented, but we must also comply with the commitments we have made.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting. Several representatives have requested to speak in exercise of the right of reply. May I remind members that, in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to 5 minutes for the second and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Vengesa (Zimbabwe): I make this statement on behalf of my Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Stanislaus I. G. Mudenge.

> "The Minister of the Netherlands, speaking on behalf of the European Union, expressed concern about what he called the situation in Zimbabwe. I am not sure whether by 'situation in Zimbabwe' he is alluding to the recent successful land reform and redistribution exercise, which we have just completed. I want to assure the Minister that the exercise, far from being a cause for concern, is truly a reason for celebration — a fulfilment of the liberation struggle.
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> "Secondly, the Minister urges my country to comply with the Southern Africa Development Community's (SADC) guidelines for democratic elections, which were adopted by SADC last month. The Minister is being rather arrogant and

presumptuous by positing himself and his colleagues as the enforcers of the SADC guidelines. Those guidelines belong to SADC, a group of free independent former colonies in southern Africa that do not accept any tutelage, especially from former colonial masters we fought and defeated only yesterday. Zimbabwe was an active partner in the formulation of the SADC guidelines and has already taken prompt and firm steps to implement those guidelines.

"Thirdly, Zimbabwe calls on the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States to desist from their daily, poisonous anti-Zimbabwe-Government propaganda emanating from their clandestine radio stations. Those three countries are destabilizing my country through radio programmes targeted at my country. I say to the Netherlands: stop your wicked broadcasts against my country through your so-called 'voice of the people' station, the United States through the 'Studio 7' station and the British through the so-called 'short-wave' radio station. Those weapons of mass deception have been unleashed against my country for the last two years.

"Furthermore, I call upon the Netherlands and those among its allies who are pouring millions of dollars into non-governmental organizations (NGO), and even through church leaders, to support the opposition party in my country, to desist from this blatant interference in the internal affairs of my country.

"Lastly, I hope that the Netherlands will be prepared to accept the verdict of the people of Zimbabwe next year, when they once again reject the British-sponsored, and Dutch-supported, puppet opposition party in my country."

Mrs. Hasteh (Islamic Republic of Iran): This evening, the Foreign Minister of the United Arab Emirates made some unacceptable claims against the territorial integrity of my country. As we have clearly and repeatedly placed on record our position on that issue on previous occasions, I do not need to go into details. The Islamic Republic of Iran is fully committed to its international obligations, especially those arising from the memorandum of understanding of 1971. We firmly believe that misunderstandings over the interpretation or application of that memorandum of understanding, if any, should be addressed with good will and through mutually agreed mechanisms, in order to find an acceptable solution.

Meanwhile, my Government has always welcomed the interaction and exchange of views between officials of Iran and the United Arab Emirates on issues of interest and concern to both our countries. We believe that dialogue between our two Governments can play a determining role in removing any existing misunderstandings.

Mr. Al-Habsi (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): My country, which has always been keen to express its firm and principled position with regard to the national cause just referred to, must again reiterate its deep disappointment about the repeated claims made by the representatives of Iran annually in this Hall. Those claims contravene all historical and legal documents and demographic facts that prove that the three islands in question are part of the sovereignty of the United Arab Emirates. It is for that reason that we today raised the question of why Iran has not submitted factual proof and legal and historical evidence and documents to show that that country has been entitled, since 1971, to occupy those three islands belonging to the United Arab Emirates, as well as to change the historical, political and demographic character of the islands.

Therefore, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the norms of international law, we call upon the international community to work to urge the Government of Iran to translate its good intentions towards the United Arab Emirates by either unconditionally entering into direct bilateral negotiations in order, once and for all, to put an end to the occupation of the three islands and return them to their original Arab inhabitants, or by resorting to the International Court of Justice for a legal settlement of the issue, following the examples provided by similar cases that have thus been resolved.

My country, which believes that stability in the Arabian Gulf region requires the establishment of good-neighbourly relations on the basis of respect for the sovereignty, independence and integrity of all Member States, will be committed to accepting the ruling of the International Court of Justice, as we are confident about our political, legal and historical rights to the three islands in question, which are an integral part of our homeland and of the territorial integrity, air

space, continental shelf and exclusive economic zone of the United Arab Emirates, which is indivisible and should not be jeopardized under any circumstances.

Mr. Hamburger (Netherlands): I will be very brief. The Netherlands, speaking in its capacity as President of the European Union, regrets Zimbabwe's reaction to the European Union's statement delivered yesterday by the Foreign Minister of the Netherlands. We wish to reiterate the European Union's commitment to the rule of law, including the need for free and fair elections. We consider that an international standard to which all countries should adhere.

The Acting President: I call on the representative of Spain on a point of order.

Mr. Oyarzún (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I simply want to say that, given the comments made by the Prime Minister of Equatorial Guinea — in which he referred to Spain — my delegation reserves its right of reply, which it will exercise at the appropriate time.

The meeting rose at 8.30 p.m.